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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE ADAPTATION OF KAFKA'S NOVEL DER PROZESS

BY JEAN-LOUIS BARRAULT AND ANDRE GIDE

by

Armgard Gerbitz

C

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and  
recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance  
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## ABSTRACT

Various elements inherent in Kafka's novel Der Prozess, when exploited by Jean-Louis Barrault in his stage-production, Le Procès, in 1947, led to its being termed a forerunner of the Theatre of the Absurd.

By reviewing firstly the growing interest of the French public in Kafka's writings up to 1947, and then by examining the particular interests of André Gide and Jean-Louis Barrault in Der Prozess, this study brings out the difficulties and contributions of their artistic collaboration and the extent to which each artist's own interests colored the stage-adaptation.

Extensive analysis and comparison of both form and content of the French adaptation and the original novel reveal that the stage-adaptation served simultaneously the interests of Gide, Barrault, Kafka, and the Theatre of the Absurd.



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## INTRODUCTION: KAFKA IN FRANCE PRIOR TO 1947

An examination of French writers' interest in Kafka and his influence on them shows that, as is commonly the case, translators gave the first impetus to this literary commerce. Translations and commentaries rather than the original German texts were the objects in France of the first literary criticisms of Kafka's writings. Alexandre Vialatte, who first translated into French Franz Kafka's novel Der Prozess (his translation was used for the purpose of comparison in this thesis), is considered the principal mediator between Kafka and the French public, for not only did he translate all of Kafka's work, but his translations enjoyed a reputation of excellence.<sup>1</sup>

In her study Franz Kafka et les lettres françaises, Maja Goth has divided the French preoccupation with Kafka into three periods.<sup>2</sup> The first period, ranging from 1928 to 1939, called "la période de l'avant-guerre," reveals only a limited interest restricted to a few initiated circles, attracted primarily by the psychological aspects of Kafka's writings. It was during the second period, including the war years, from 1941 to 1949, that the French public became fully aware of Franz Kafka, recognizing in him a prophet and representative of the war period. After 1949, this lively interest appears to have been quickly

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<sup>1</sup> Franz Kafka, Le Procès, trans. Alexandre Vialatte, Gallimard (Paris, 1943).

<sup>2</sup> Maja Goth, Franz Kafka et les lettres françaises 1928-1955 (Paris, 1956). All subsequent references to this work or quotations from it will be indicated in my text by the author's name and page reference.

Since Kafka's reception in France is not the main issue in this thesis, I quote in the introduction the authoritative work on this subject by Maja Goth.



exhausted. The general public turned its attention to other writers; and, once more, the concern with Kafka's writings remained in the hands of restricted literary circles, which, however, now penetrated more deeply into the problems which Kafka's work had revealed.

It was in La Nouvelle Revue Française that the first translations of Kafka appeared. In 1928, it published Vialatte's translation of the Metamorphosis which remained without an echo. In 1929, there appeared in this review the translations of a few "petits récits" by K.-W. Koerner, Jules Supervielle and Félix Bertaux. Between 1930 and 1933, this first modest interest seems to have faded. But interest is soon stimulated once more by the first study concerning Kafka, undertaken by the philosopher Bernard Groethuysen, also published by the N.R.F. in 1933. The same year appeared the first French translation of Der Prozess, entitled Le Procès, by the N.R.F. The preface to this edition repeated Groethuysen's reflections on the problems of guilt and anguish, the logic of the absurd, and "l'oubli du Moi." The first article devoted to this novel, written by Denis de Rougement, also appeared in the N.R.F. in 1934. Following this, a number of philosophical dissertations on Kafka's work were written. In 1934, Denis Saurat, in his book entitled Modernes, mentions Kafka with André Gide, Proust, Valéry and other French writers. Dissertations such as those written by Wladimir Weidele in 1936, and by Paul L. Landsberg in 1939, had a primarily psychological interest in Kafka's work. Weidele, for example, discovered in Kafka a modern tendency which strove to "agir sur l'inconscient d'une façon préméditée, de changer dans une direction voulue la vie intérieure du lecteur" (Goth, p. 241); and Landsberg, studying Kafka's "réalisme" which is accompanied by a modification of the sense of the real, established a convincing analysis of the author's psychological system,



classifying him as a schizophrenic. By 1939, Le Château had already been published and a genuine interest for Kafka can be said to exist among the French Surrealists. In his writings, they tried to discover a means of revealing the surrealism of existence. It was not until 1940, that André Gide, in his Journal, made short notations concerning his impressions upon reading Kafka.

However, it was only with the war years that widely ranging, literary discussions of Kafka's work began. The suffering caused by the war seemed to have awakened that peculiar sensibility for "la détresse fondamentale et l'absurdité que respire l'univers de Kafka" (Goth, p. 244). All those who had known a heightened awareness of their own existence and of the human situation during the years of the Second World War felt a kinship with Kafka, amongst them Jean-Louis Barrault and André Gide. The main spiritual and philosophical movements of this time, the philosophers of the Absurd and of Existentialism, Catholic and Protestant philosophers, began to examine Kafka's work. Thus, the "critique littéraire catholique" discovered in it a lack of Christian grace; and the Protestant point of view emphasized its Judeo-Christian environment. Claude Edmonde Magny preceded Sartre and Camus by one year in writing about the "absurd" element in Kafka's writings. In her essay of 1942, which appeared in the Cahiers du Sud, she spoke of the "mythe poétique" and of the absurd and intolerable reality which Kafka has forged. In 1943, Camus's and Sartre's comments followed in several editions of the Cahiers du Sud. By 1945, literary criticism of Kafka abounded. Studies by Albert Béguin, Maurice Blanchot, Jean Starobinski and Pierre Klossowski questioned the importance of the Jewish heritage and religious belief in Kafka's works. Entering the scene in 1946, the Communists judged Kafka's influence to be demoralizing



and called him a representative of "la littérature noire." By the year 1947, this continued preoccupation with Kafka and attempts to classify his thought began to show a marked tendency toward psychoanalysis; Dr. Hesnard, for example, wrote about the guilt complex and the Oedipus complex which he had discovered in Kafka. In 1948, Michel Carrouges published La mystique du surhomme in which he examined, with respect to Kafka, the conscience of modern man which presents a double aspect: "d'une part il est l'homme de la 'mort de Dieu' d'autre part il est pénétré par la lumière de la foi" (Goth, p. 248). Finally, in 1946, André Gide and Jean-Louis Barrault dramatized Der Prozess<sup>3</sup>, presented at the Théâtre Marigny in Paris on October 10, 1947. With this production, Kafka was presented to the public at large which had, up to this moment, been ignorant or only dimly aware of him. ("La popularité de Kafka fut du reste largement servie par l'adaptation du Procès au théâtre [Goth, p. 250].) By 1949, Kafka's popularity had been firmly established in France. During this second period the major philosophical movements, psychoanalysis, and even the French public had become aware of him.

After 1949, literature dealing with Kafka became less abundant, since the first feverish enthusiasm was followed by the more penetrating interest of a more restricted circle. The presentation of Le Procès on the stage of the Marigny Theatre can thus be situated roughly at the height of interest in Kafka. In retrospect, it seems as if this visual presentation was inevitable, in as much as Kafka had become, in the mentality of so many French, a part of the actual events of the time. Esslin writes in

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<sup>3</sup> André Gide and Jean-Louis Barrault, Le Procès: Pièce tirée du roman de Kafka, 23rd ed., Gallimard (Paris, 1947).



his book The Theatre of the Absurd:

This was a production that deeply stirred its public. It came at a peculiarly propitious moment--shortly after the nightmare world of the German occupation had vanished. Kafka's dream of guilt and the arbitrariness of the powers that rule the world<sup>4</sup> was more for the French audience of 1947 than a mere fantasy.<sup>4</sup>

Jean-Louis Barrault's words--"l'art du théâtre est essentiellement un art d'Actualité. . . . Parce que l'art du théâtre traite essentiellement du Présent et du Simultané"<sup>5</sup>--also stress the vital interest the subject of K.'s trial must have held for the French public of 1947.

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (New York, 1961), Anchor Books. All subsequent references to this work or quotationf from it will be indicated in my text by the author's name and page reference.

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Louis Barrault, Réflexions sur le théâtre (Paris, 1949), p. 139.



## THE INTEREST OF ANDRE GIDE AND JEAN-LOUIS BARRAULT IN FRANZ KAFKA

In the Introduction, the French interest in Kafka's literature up to 1947, has been summarized. It has been noted that particularly during the years of the Second World War, this preoccupation with Kafka's writings intensified. The present chapter will deal with the interest which Kafka could have held for André Gide and Jean-Louis Barrault and which must have consequently led to their collaboration in the adaptation of Der Prozess, performed at the height of Kafka's popularity in France.

In approaching Gide's reason for participating in this enterprise, it is perhaps necessary to start with a more general view of his attitude to foreign literature and the importance of it for his own thoughts and literary development, since in his case it was less a sense of urgency and actuality that urged him into writing the play than it was with Jean-Louis Barrault, "l'homme de théâtre." In Gide's case it was more a literary curiosity and personal admiration that attracted him to Kafka. However, another reason for dwelling on Gide's relationship to foreign literature, particularly to German literature and, above all, to Goethe, is the speculation that this broader interest in German letters might have, to some extent, influenced Gide's literary adaptation of Kafka.

In her book André Gide et la pensée allemande, Renée Lang states that, in her opinion, Gide was extremely vulnerable to foreign influence because of his particularly receptive and permeable character.<sup>6</sup> His natural curiosity, his principle of "l'accueil et déracinement," his love of

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<sup>6</sup> Renée Lang, André Gide et la pensée allemande, ed. Egloff (Paris, 1949). All subsequent references to this work or quotations from it will be indicated in my text by the author's name and page reference.



strange cultures, his cosmopolitanism, and, above all, his willingness to welcome all the movements and influences of the present, made him important as a representative of his time. In a letter to Renée Lang, Gide admits this readily: "Car vous savez (et faites valoir) que non seulement je ne renie pas mes guides, mes initiateurs et mes maîtres, j'ai plaisir à dire et proclamer leur rôle dans mes pensées et mes écrits" (Lang, pp. 177-78). In another letter to her he also agrees that he is the sum of all the influences which he underwent and assimilated, and which remained a part of his personality. In his literary creations, however, Gide only retained that which confirmed or which met the needs of his own thoughts, feelings and inner conflicts, even though in his earlier years he frequently sought to hide behind chosen models, voluntarily allowing quotations from the works of men whom he admired to reveal his own thoughts. As the former were assimilated by Gide, he adapted them, in the course of his evolution, to his own intellectual and emotional development. Thus, one and the same influence commonly underwent many important changes, figuring at one time or another as a "conseil," as an authority, or as a stimulant. But it is important to remember that these encounters varied according to Gide's intellectual development: certain influences fortifying a natural disposition, others encouraging him to free himself and to move beyond the restrictions imposed by his upbringing and his early education.

Goethe was probably one of the most decisive and persistent foreign influences during Gide's whole lifetime; and it was with his thoughts and ideas that Gide felt the closest affinity toward the end of his life--at the time that he adapted Kafka's novel to the French stage. In his "Projet de conférence pour Berlin," Gide said in regard to Goethe: "Non seulement j'ai subi son influence, mais j'ai voulu sciemment m'y



soumettre" (Lang, p. 121). Here again, and perhaps more clearly than previously, Gide's attempt to cultivate native affinities is detected. As early as 1892, the name of Goethe appears regularly in Gide's work. At first, he was attracted by the titanism of Goethe, as well as by the conviction that here he could find the authorization for his own longing to participate fully in life, involving his whole being without restrictions. In other words, Gide at this time was attracted to Goethe for the same reasons which led him to search for himself in the writings of Nietzsche. As Renée Lang points out, he wrote in his Goethe: "C'est aussi que j'avais à me délivrer des entraves d'une morale puritaine qui, pour un temps, avait bien pu me raidir et m'enseigner la résistance, mais dont je ne sentais plus à présent que la restriction et la gêne" (Lang, p. 133). In both their writings, he could find the exaltation of individualism, "le culte du moi," the affirmation of life, the philosophy of becoming, and an intense anti-clericalism. However, toward the end of his life, which he had spent in the search of himself, of self-fulfilment, Gide's aspirations became humbler, gradually moving closer to an "individualisme serviable," better adapted to reality, and moving away from the Nietzschean ethic of the "surhomme." Growing more aware of life around him and of human misery, he was strongly attracted by "le côté proprement humaniste de Goethe" which upheld the idea of "une éthique laïque" and the belief that "l'homme n'est pas déchu; il fait partie du royaume naturel, il n'a nul besoin de sauveur, et il doit avancer vers la création et la sérénité au lieu de l'abdication et l'angoisse."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Catherine H. Savage, André Gide. L'Evolution de sa pensée religieuse, ed. Nizet (Paris, 1962), p. 222.  
All subsequent references to this work or quotations from it will be indicated in my text by the author's name and page reference.



During the last twenty years of his life, Gide repeatedly stressed the necessity of a new humanistic spirituality, believing that, in spite of all, a new spirituality was possible, as he himself had come to know: "Nous restons reconnaissants à Goethe, car il nous donne le plus bel exemple, à la fois souriant et grave, de ce que, sans aucun secours de la Grâce, l'homme, de lui-même, peut obtenir" (Savage, p. 222).

Gide was attracted to German literature and culture because he found it fertile and stimulating, because he saw it as complementary to the French. In his "Projet de Conférence pour Berlin," he stated that he was attracted to German literature and culture, not because it resembled the French, but, on the contrary, because of the differences which made it of the utmost importance that these two nations question and listen to each other in order to understand each other: "Nous sommes un peuple de dessinateurs, vous êtes un peuple de musiciens. . . . Nous ne sommes pas semblables, nous sommes complémentaires" (Lang, p. 38). In his Journal 1939-1942, Gide remarked that he was attracted to foreign literature because unlike the French authors whom he had "dans le sang, dans la cervelle" and who were made of "la même étoffe que moi," foreign writers provided strange material not produced spontaneously in his own country.<sup>8</sup>

The difficulties and obstacles encountered in reading foreign literature in the original or in an endeavor to translate the original work also attracted Gide to German texts. A sense of pride in achievement from striving to improve his understanding added to the pleasure which Gide experienced in tackling a foreign work. He believed that an interest in strange cultures and an "Auseinandersetzung" with it were vital because they constituted one of the most, if not the most, important way in which

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<sup>8</sup> André Gide, Journal 1939-1942, ed. Gallimard (Paris, 1954), p. 1277.



French literature and culture could be enriched and renewed. More personally, through this contact an awareness of one's own values and limitations as well as a critical sense could be gradually developed. This natural cosmopolitan disposition and his enthusiasm for all that was strange to him, presenting an obstacle to overcome, made Gide into one of the principal intermediaries of foreign culture in France during the first half of this century. His willingness to welcome new and often strange elements enabled him frequently to detect, before most contemporaries, significant new cultural developments and to reply to questions which his contemporaries had as yet not distinctly formulated. His inclination to teach, to pass on and to stimulate those around him with thoughts, ideas, and forms, found an outlet in his numerous translations, commentaries, interpretations and adaptations of new works. Thus Gide, as it is widely acknowledged, contributed significantly to the propagation of foreign literature in France.

Most of the enumerated points of attraction of foreign literature for André Gide most likely also played a significant role in his early interest in Kafka. His natural tendency to welcome foreign writers in France and his remarkable ability to immediately sense their cultural or literary significance probably led to the following remark in the Journal for 1940: "Je relis le Procès de Kafka avec une admiration plus vive encore, s'il se peut, que lorsque je découvrais ce livre prestigieux" (Gide, Journal, p. 50). He also refers to his re-reading of Vialatte's translation of Der Prozess. The fact that he had read the work on an earlier occasion, probably not long after it first appeared in France in 1933, reveals that Kafka must have made a strong impression on Gide, one that he was, however, not able to define more clearly, even after his second



reading. This is shown by the following entry in the Journal for 1940: "Son livre échappe à toute explication rationnelle" (Gide, Journal, p. 50). He did, however, in the same short remark give some indication of aspects of the novel which had particularly caught his attention: "Le réalisme de ses peintures empiète sans cesse sur l'imaginaire, et je ne saurais dire ce que j'y admire le plus: la notation 'naturaliste' d'un univers fantastique mais que la minutieuse exactitude des peintures sait rendre réel à nos yeux ou la sûre audace des embardées vers l'étrange. Il y a là beaucoup à apprendre" (Gide, Journal, p. 50). Whether or not Gide was the first to have referred to this striking trait of Kafka's work, his admirably ambiguous manner of fusing realities, is impossible to prove in this thesis. That he was one of the first is without doubt. A year later, in a work entitled Découvrons Henri Michaux, he again alluded to the same phenomenon in which the imaginary, subjective world imposes itself on the objective reality of every day life, except this time in connection with Michaux's work:

Le malaise vient de la relation qui s'établit involontairement en notre esprit entre l'imaginaire et le réel. Et ce malaise, parfois, traversant la bouffonnerie, tourne à l'angoisse. Après tout, se dit-on, tout cela, qui n'existe pas, pourrait être; et tout ce que nous savons qui est pourrait bien ne pas avoir beaucoup plus de réalité. Ce qui se passe sur cette terre n'est pas, somme toute, beaucoup plus raisonnable que ce que Michaux nous peint. (Goth, p. 71)

However, these words are as valid for Kafka as they are for Michaux, since both writers grasp the uncertainty of existence, the anguish that arises from living in an unstable world which appears to be stable in its regularity. Maybe it is in this remark that Gide alludes to Kafka's great prophetic sensibility, for, in May 1942, he writes in his Journal: "Je songe sans cesse au Procès. Sentiment de ne pas encore 'être en règle.' S'il fallait autant de formalités pour mourir . . ." (Gide, Journal, p. 116).



In the final part of his Journal notation of 1940, Gide refers to "l'angoisse que ce livre respire" which is "par moments, presque intolérable, car comment ne pas se dire sans cesse: cet être traqué c'est moi" (Gide, Journal, p. 50). Here Gide suggests a personal affinity with Kafka's hero, although an analysis of the extent of this identification must be left to the next chapter of this thesis. However short this remark, it precedes Sartre's now famous existential slogan, "L'angoisse c'est moi," which he published in his book L'Etre et le néant in 1943. Unfortunately, in view of the very limited extent to which Gide expressed himself about Kafka and his work, it cannot be maintained that Gide contributed significantly to the growing international awareness of Kafka until the dramatic adaptation was presented in Paris. Certainly he must have been attracted and greatly impressed by the strange manner in which Kafka treated the existential question, a familiar problem to Gide himself, as well as by other aspects of the work which echoed his own complex nature, his aspirations, contradictory emotions, "trouble intérieur," and thoughts. But Renée Lang's interpretation is perhaps a key to Gide's initial timidity. "Son adaptation à la scène du Procès de Kafka, le 10 octobre 1947, est plus encore que le témoignage littéraire, l'apport d'une éthique diamétralement opposée à la sienne" (Lang, p. 32). At about the time of his encounter with Kafka, Gide was already very impregnated with Goethean humanism, the belief in man's terrestrial fulfilment, although, unlike Goethe who "dans la lutte entre nos aspirations individuelles et le bien collectif, plaide le triomphe de la volonté et de la raison," Gide continued to persist in his "acceptation fervente de ses contradictions, faisant surgir ce qui forme malgré lui le propre de son oeuvre: le trouble intérieur" (Savage, p. 175). It is the optimistic approach that diametrically opposed the mature Gide to



the solution of Kafka's novel, a question that will be dealt with at the end of the chapter entitled "Adaptation: Act II of the Play."

Jean-Louis Barrault initiated the project of adapting Kafka's Der Prozess to the stage. Gide might have thought of a translation at some time, but the idea of the dramatic adaptation came directly from Barrault. Gide himself wrote on December 1946, in his preface to Le Procès: "Je tiens d'abord à préciser ceci: sans Jean-Louis Barrault n'existerait non plus cette pièce inspirée par le célèbre roman de Kafka" (Gide, Procès, p. 7). For even though Gide had, as he himself states, "une admiration des plus vives" for the book, he felt the obstacles which he would encounter to be nearly insurmountable. He also hesitated because he felt that the cinema would be a more appropriate medium. Only with Barrault's encouragement and support did Gide finally attempt the undertaking, in which Barrault had already taken the first, decisive steps. In this regard, Gide wrote in his preface:

A mon retour en France en 45, il revient à la charge. Il avait travaillé de son côté, préparé une sorte de scénario déjà détaillé, qu'il me soumit. Beaucoup plus conscient que moi des ressources et des possibilités de la mise en scène, il affrontait les pires difficultés avec une hardiesse, une témérité que, seul, je n'aurais point osé, mais que, soutenu par lui, je risquais de tout coeur. Il ne s'agissait plus que de couvrir de chair le squelette qu'il m'apportait. (Gide, Procès, p. 8)

It was not long before Gide was overcome by Barrault's spirit of enthusiasm and zeal, which inspired the two men to work a whole year on the adaptation.

Jean-Louis Barrault's interest in Kafka seems to date from the early war years. During these years, when "Hitler grandissait, comme le cadavre de Ionesco dans Comment s'en débarrasser," Barrault like many of his con-



temporaries, felt a close kinship to Kafka's hero "K."<sup>9</sup> In him they recognized themselves as the persecuted victims of an inhuman organization, the fascist dictatorship, as well as the abandoned individuals of a degenerate democratic society. They experienced the "angoisse" so predominant in Kafka's work. Barrault's concept of the purpose and objective of the modern theatre, namely the presentation of issues of contemporary interest, made him particularly sensitive to anything pertaining to problems concerning the human condition of modern man. Referring to this sensitivity, Gérard Bauer, in his review of the production of the play, writes: "La pensée fragmentaire de Kafka, son S.O.S. dont nous percevons le sens sans en recevoir toujours tous les mots, a été recueillie par bien des gens, attentifs aux moindres ondes que traversaient notre ciel."<sup>10</sup> It was this concern that immediately sparked Barrault's interest and enthusiasm for Kafka to whom he felt attracted as to a brother, suffering from the same growing restrictions on the individual's freedom and from an inexplicable sense of guilt, questioning the justice existing in the vast and inextricable, systematized administrative organization of society that threatened to eclipse the individual (Barrault, "Cas . . . .," Cahiers, L, 72). For Barrault, Kafka also became the prophet of modern society when he announced, or rather denounced, the growing cynicism and the difficulty to communicate with others, the general deception, the fundamental instability in which the

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<sup>9</sup> Jean-Louis Barrault, "Cas de conscience devant Kafka," Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeleine Renaud-Jean-Louis Barrault, L (1965), 71. All subsequent references to articles in this series will be indicated in my text by the author's name, the abbreviated title of the article, Cahiers, and volume and page reference.

<sup>10</sup> Gérard Bauer, "Le Théâtre," Revue de Paris, XXII (1947), 152.



individual trying to remain free and sincere would find himself completely abandoned. He wrote: "Kafka alors était la révélation, du moins pour moi" (Barrault, "Cas . . . ,"Cahiers, L, 71).

Another element in the novel, other than the "Zeitgeist" that led Barrault to adapting it for the theatre, was "cette vision particulièrement théâtrale puisqu'elle s'appuie en premier lieu sur l'ambiguité de la vie: logique et absurde, tragique et burlesque, hostile et aimable, etc. etc. toujours à deux tranchants" (Barrault, "Cas . . . ,"Cahiers, L, 81). As a man of the theatre with which the "theatre of the absurd" is in direct lineage, Barrault discovered immense theatrical possibilities in Kafka's Der Prozess: "Tout, dans Kafka, est une représentation théâtrale de la vie . . . comment peut-il, dès lors, y avoir théâtre? C'est déjà fait à l'intérieur du roman" (Barrault, "Cas . . . ,"Cahiers, L, 76). These possibilities lent themselves favorably to his own style of stage production with its emphasis on the visual rather than on the literary elements of plays since Kafka's manner of evoking the absurdity of man's existence and K.'s inner struggle is also of a more descriptive rather than philosophical and speculative nature. As for the difficulty of conveying the ambiguity so strongly inherent in Kafka's work--the one aspect which to Kafka specialists seems incompatible with the theatre--for Barrault it was not an insurmountable obstacle, since for him the stage already was

le terrain rêvé de l'ambiguïté, cet espace que l'on a réservé à l'action, c'est-à-dire: la scène? Est-il le lieu du réel ou le lieu du rêve? Qu'est-ce que c'est que cet art, c'est-à-dire ce rêve qui vous atteint non seulement par la vue et par l'ouïe mais par les quatre vingt-quinze autres sens que l'on englobe sous l'énorme et mystérieux sens du toucher? (Barrault, "Cas . . . ,"Cahiers, L, 80).

In spite of the numerous obstacles and difficulties that a dramatic adaptation of Kafka's work presented, both Gide and Barrault were ready to meet them, partly because of their common love for tackling anything new and challenging,



but predominately because both desired to "faire partager au plus grand nombre de personnes notre admiration pour Kafka" (Barrault, "Cas . . . ,"  
Cahiers, L, 79). Accordingly, Gide writes in his preface to the play that he rarely put more "'coeur à l'ouvrage,' tout en m'effaçant le plus possible pour céder la place à Kafka, dont je tenais à respecter toutes les intentions" (Gide, Procès, p. 9). To establish whether or not Gide was able to carry through his good intentions and whether or not Jean-Louis Barrault, with his mise en scène and his own portrayal of K., was true to Kafka's spirit remains one of the objectives of this thesis.



#### ADAPTATION: ACT I OF THE PLAY

In this chapter of the thesis the original German text of the novel Der Prozess, edited by Fischer Bücherei,<sup>11</sup> will be used as a source of reference when comparing the novel written by Kafka to the dramatic adaptation executed by the combined efforts of André Gide and Jean-Louis Barrault. After careful examination it was found that the Vialatte translation used by both Barrault and Gide ("Je n'eus du reste, le plus souvent, qu'à me servir du texte de l'excellente traduction de Vialatte" [Gide, Procès, p. 9]) was so faithful to the original text, that it was acceptable to resort to the German text. Perhaps the one significant change in the translation which should be mentioned, since it might have had some bearing on the work of adapting Der Prozess, concerns the visual clarification which Vialatte introduced into his translation. By means of changes in the punctuation he frequently divides up long, rambling sentences used by Kafka and, by visually setting off the dialogue from the action, he probably greatly facilitated the adaptation into a dramatic form.

The atmosphere of the opening episode in the novel has generally been successfully captured in the same scene of the adaptation. The few apparent changes are not significant deviations from the meaning and sense of the original, but rather serve to underline and emphasize certain aspects of the novel which had particularly struck the adapters upon reading Kafka's work. They are, as Jean-Louis Barrault calls them, "des

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<sup>11</sup> Franz Kafka, Der Prozess, Fischer Bücherei (Frankfurt am Main, 1962). All further references to this work will be indicated in my text by the author's name and the page reference.



équivalences," which are more suitable to the new dramatic form into which the novel is adapted. In this regard, Barrault writes:

De quoi s'agit-il? Il s'agit de restituer au spectateur l'émotion qu'a éprouvée le lecteur et de l'inciter au même courant de réflexion et de pensées, avec des moyens différents. L'adaptateur ira donc chercher l'essentiel de l'oeuvre romanesque et s'attachera à l'exprimer, lui seul. Il lui arrivera de supprimer de longs et importants chapitres, des personnages, etc., de choisir une anecdote à possibilités dramatiques qui, dans le roman, n'occupait peut-être qu'une place secondaire; surtout, il prendra soin d'exprimer dramatiquement et non pas forcément par du texte la pensée de l'auteur (ainsi, dans Le Procès, certains éclairages, certains bruitages, et le décor même, et les costumes, remplaçaient par moment le texte de Kafka), bref, de donner à tous moments des équivalences.<sup>12</sup>

Unlike the novel, the play opens with the biblical phrase "Paix sur la terre aux hommes de bonne volonté," spoken by K. in a mocking and jeering tone and accompanied by a disdainful gesture. Dramatically, these words are most likely very effective, especially in an opening phrase. The words being familiar to a French audience, associations are immediately formed. But the audience would probably tend to put the whole approaching conflict into a religious context, after having been surprised by such an outburst. However, nothing that follows in the next scenes explains this nor further clarifies this religious implication. Only after having analyzed the scene at the cathedral, at the end of the play, does one realize that these first few words should be understood in a Gidian manner, rather than in their traditional sense, for they are but an example of the manner in which André Gide frequently resorted to biblical references, especially from the New Testament, when trying to clarify a personal moral or ethical conviction. A study of Gide's religious thought has confirmed this use of the Gospels: "Néanmoins, au lieu de considérer le Nouveau

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<sup>12</sup> Jean-Louis Barrault, "'Adaptation' est le contraire de 'Decoupage,'" Carrefour (1955).



Testament comme un document sacré, d'inspiration miraculeuse, il y puise seulement des précepts moraux de portée humaine et un modèle de la vie éthique la plus haute" (Savage, p. 251). An audience unaware of this Gidian peculiarity could thus be easily mislead by such words and could be made to believe that K. pronounces these words sneeringly, because he has lost, or because he never possessed, a real faith. If, however, the audience considered this remark in relation to the words that directly follow--"Qu'est-ce que je vais bien pouvoir inventer pour ma fête? ... Quelque chose de pas ordinaire ... qui tranche un peu sur le quotidien. Il faut tout de même comprendre que j'en ai un peu soupé, du quotidien... (Gide, Procès, p. 18)--it could sense a certain impatience in K.'s tone, possibly due to the wish to break with the peace and calm of the routine of his life. But this interpretation would no longer be in accordance with Kafka, for nowhere in the novel is there mention made of K.'s wishing for something extraordinary to happen on the occasion of his birthday. Gide, by adding words that pertain directly to the extraordinary, prepares the audience for what is going to happen, whereas Kafka gives the reader no time to prepare for the unexpected. In this manner Gide adds clarification to the whole situation by stating clearly, unlike Kafka who only vaguely implies it, that extraordinary elements are involved. This clarification for the sake of dramatic communication necessarily reduces much of Kafka's subtle interplay between the objective and the subjective reality, often replacing it by a direct statement, as in the above mentioned case, which helps to orientate the audience.

As for the opening phrase, it should really be interpreted as Gide's, not K.'s comment, for in the context of the whole play, this remark can be taken to be an ironic comment on the total indifference and banality of life,



something that K. only gradually becomes aware of as his trial progresses. Therefore at this stage of K.'s development one could not possibly attribute such lucidity to him, above all if one considers his purpose in life, his work and his attitude to his surrounding: "J'ignore tout et ne veux rien savoir" (Gide, p. 21). These "hommes de bonne volonté" are they not, like K.'s uncle, those who mean well, but are fundamentally helpless when it comes to saving someone who has moved beyond the frontiers of the conventional sphere in an attempt to maintain his personal liberty? "Et pourtant ce que nous avons à défendre, c'est notre liberté, c'est notre vie" (Gide, p. 197). Are they not those men who believe in "paix sur la terre" because they lead a secure life of blind indifference, helping individuals like K. only in as far as it is not too inconvenient to them? The closing words of the play, spoken by spectators present at K.'s execution, serve to clarify the ironic connotation Gide has given to the first statement.

La Dame "Oh! regarde... Qu'est-ce qu'on va lui faire...? C'est très curieux."

Le Monsieur "Viens ma chérie. C'est des affaires de Justice. Ça ne nous regarde pas." (Gide, p. 216)

People like K. who really are of "bonne volonté" will lose their peace of mind and soul the moment they move beyond the accepted and unquestioned frontiers of society, in an attempt to come to terms with problems that put their existence in question. Out of this attempt at "bonne volonté" arises loneliness and anguish, but never peace of mind. This is therefore clearly Gide's ironic opening statement on the whole situation that follows. At this point of the play the sentence necessarily remains incomprehensible to the audience. Only after the climax in the play does this phrase and the tone in which it is said take on its full meaning and significance--only then does its moral, rather than religious connotation, become clear. However,



by that time, the unprepared audience, hearing rather than reading, has already forgotten this first phrase. For this reason, the phrase serves primarily a dramatic, rather than literary function. It immediately arouses the spectators' interest by its familiar content, as well as by the manner in which it is said. The hero's unusual and almost violent reaction to the usually comforting words of the Scriptures is dramatically effective, even though Gide did not manage to integrate it successfully into the rest of the play. If Gide had on other occasions in the play alluded to these words and revived their memory in the spectator's mind, then one could possibly speak of them as being the beginning of a thematic thread, especially because the words in the last scene tie in so well with these opening words. But Gide failed to do this and therefore, as well as for the other reasons already mentioned, the words lose much of their literary significance on stage.

Another important change, already apparent in the first scene and adopted throughout the play, arises from the need to reveal to the audience K.'s thoughts and reflections. Passages such as the following are, in the play, often translated into dialogue form and gesture:

Hier schien ihm das aber nicht richtig. Man konnte zwar das Ganze als Spass ansehen, als einen groben Spass, den ihm aus unbekannten Gründen, vielleicht weil heute sein dreissigster Geburtstag war, die Kollegen in der Bank veranstaltet hatten, es war natürlich möglich, vielleicht brauchte er nur auf irgendeine Weise den Wächtern ins Gesicht zu lachen, und sie würden mitlachen. (Kafka, p. 9)

Messieurs, je ne sais pas encore. . . . Dois-je croire que je suis victime d'une erreur ou l'objet d'une grossière plaisanterie de la part de mes collègues à la banque . . . à l'occasion peut-être de mon trentième anniversaire. (Il prend le parti de rire en se forçant.) (Gide, pp. 23-24)

By analyzing the order in which the events gradually evolve in the first act of the play and then comparing it to the novel, important differences



can be detected that are decisive for the whole development of the play. The major change is perhaps the omission of the events of the second and fourth chapters of the novel from the first act of the play. Whereas the encounter with Frl. Montag has been removed altogether, K.'s first official interrogation has been placed toward the end of the trial, giving to it a climatic significance it does not have in the novel where it occurs at the very beginning of the whole procedure. Further consideration will be given to this particular innovation when dealing with the second act of the play, but at this stage of the analysis other less obvious changes in the order of events and their significance must be examined.

In the novel the interview with the Brigadier is terminated by K.'s leaving for his office, accompanied by the three bank clerks. No scene at the office follows this, as it does in the play. Instead Kafka gives a very short general synopsis of the routine of K.'s working-day and evening, returning, however, to the events of the evening of the same day, namely to the conversation with Mrs. Grubach and Miss Bürstner, ending with this his first chapter. The second chapter begins with the scene at the office in which K. receives the anonymous telephone call and the invitation from the "Direktor-Stellvertreter." The exact day of this call is not given, but by the division into a new chapter the reader receives the impression that at least a couple of days must have elapsed between the first and the second event.

In the play time has been greatly compressed. Thus the scene at the office takes place immediately after K.'s interview with the Brigadier, after his arrival at the office. This is followed in the evening, as in the novel, by the conversation with the two women. But, unlike in the



novel, the long eventful day in the play does not end with K.'s going to bed, rather satisfied with his behavior and quickly lulled to sleep by this feeling. Instead Gide has taken another chapter in the novel, entitled "Der Prügler," and incorporated it into the events of the first day. In the novel Kafka describes the "Prügler" episode as just another occurrence, happening in no particular relationship to the whole trial procedure and, as such, made it into a separate chapter, Chapter 5. In the play, the scene appears to arise directly out of the strange events of the first day and K.'s search for the tribunal before which he is to appear "am nächsten Sonntag" (Kafka, p. 28) takes place the very next day after his arrest. The action on stage, the noises and the lighting contribute to creating the effect of a transition from night to morning rather than a transition over a period of days.

L'aube monte.  
 Les respirations cessent.  
 La pulsation cesse.  
 Au loin un réveil-matin.  
 Des appels de voisins.  
 Un laitier.  
 Le jour vient.  
 K. se réveille, s'étire, se lève. (Gide, p. 76)

By crowding several events, which in the novel take place over a longer period of time, into a restricted time limit, Gide has changed the whole time element of the novel, for this necessary restriction is contrary to the general design of Kafka's text. Gide has added movement and tension to the story, whereas in Kafka's work, in spite of the division into chapters, the dominant impression is that of practical immobility. That is to say, in the novel a strong feeling of density and continuity prevails, but it leads nowhere. Gide, by dividing the whole trial into two acts, has disturbed this monotonous continuity which Kafka achieved by a subtle



equilibrium among the chapters. Thus, the events of Act I seem to happen within a very short period of time, as do the events of Act II. The only longer time lapse appears to occur between the two acts. But the audience is not informed of its length: it learns only that K. has a look of fatigue and has lost weight. Thus, by the compression of time, due to the dramatic adjustment, Gide has made the whole situation dramatically more suitable, but has at the same time considerably weakened the feeling of frustration to which Kafka's impression of immobility contributes.

The manner in which Gide changed the order of events in Act I not only brought about a fundamental change in the time element of the whole procedure, but it also influenced the significance of the various episodes. For example, the episode with "der Prügler," which comprises the whole fifth chapter in the novel, becomes a shorter, transitional scene in the play. Unlike in the novel, where it stands separately, not obviously connected with the preceding and following chapters, it clearly serves as an interlude in the play, in that it bridges the time between midnight and morning and also is a link between K.'s more or less unconscious pre-occupation with his trial, and his conscious search for the courthouse in the morning. This, however, is not the only important change which influenced the significance of the scene. In the novel, this incident is depicted as a real event, as something which happens within the framework of the objective reality in which K. moves habitually:

Als K. an einem der nächsten Abende den Korridor passierte, der sein Büro von der Haupttreppe trennte - er ging diesmal fast als der letzte nach Hause, nur in der Expedition arbeiteten noch zwei Diener im kleinen Lichtfeld einer Glühlampe -, hörte er hinter einer Tür, hinter der er immer nur eine Rumpelkammer vermutet hatte, ohne sie jemals selbst gesehen zu haben, Seufzer aussstoßen. (Kafka, p. 63)

In the play Gide has removed the incident altogether into the subjective reality of K.'s unconsciousness--into the world of dreams. By doing this,



he has given a different meaning to this episode. In the novel it serves to underline K.'s growing subconscious preoccupation with the trial and to reveal how this preoccupation is beginning to interfere with his unreflective every-day existence, threatening to disrupt its calmness by creating disorder and anguish.

Fast weinend lief er zu den Dienern, die ruhig an den Kopiermaschinen arbeiteten und erstaunt in ihrer Arbeit innehielten.  
"Räumt doch endlich die Rumpelkammer aus," rief er. "Wir versinken ja im Schmutz!" (Kafka, p. 68)

The dream-scene in the play cannot possibly serve the same objective, since it does not show this subtle and imperceptible shift between the two levels of reality, but is restricted to the realm of the subconscious. It is more appropriate and comprehensible as K.'s natural emotional reaction to the morning events which took him so much by surprise, whereas the incident in the novel must be regarded more as the outcome of a slowly growing obsession that is beginning to take a hold of K. as the result of such experiences as the interrogation and the attack of nausea in the corridor of the courthouse. To the respective reader and spectator the dream would most likely be a more comprehensible and familiar means of depicting a psychological reality than Kafka's manner of veiling the frontiers between the subjective and objective realities, leaving the reader with an uneasy feeling. For what disturbs the reader on his encounter with the "Prügler" episode in the book, is that such a weird experience can be portrayed with so much actuality and plausibility--something so contrary to K.'s habitual and logical way of thinking. "It is the conventional narration, the factual, ordinary rendering of this event which produces the effect of the uncanny."<sup>13</sup> The method by which

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<sup>13</sup> Selma Fraiberg, "Kafka and the Dream," in Art and Psychoanalysis, William Phillips, Criterion Books (New York, 1957), p. 128.



Kafka imposes the mental state of his hero on to the objective reality of the outside world creates a much greater feeling of mystery and strangeness than by exposing the psychological reality through a dream. Certainly, Gide heightened the dramatic tension of the play by changing the order of events and by inserting this strange encounter in the form of a tormenting dream. But by doing so, he also destroyed most of the subtle ambiguity of this episode. He completely dropped the suggestive imagery of the "Rumpelkammer," the store-room into which the door opens (or could it not be interpreted as K.'s mind into which he enters?) and for it substituted the familiar image of the dream-world. Consequently, Gide modifies the horror which the emergence and interference of our mental fantasies, in the realm of our habitual and conscious activities, can create. For when strange events are encountered in a dream they are not subjected to reasoning, as they would be in reality, where they would immediately fall into conflict with our logical faculty. However, from the point of view of the dramatist, Gide most likely chose the most direct dramatic means of presenting a psychological reality, even though he distorts Kafka's subtle ambiguity by this dramatic magnification.

This distortion of the subtle ambiguity for the sake of more effective theatrical representation is also encountered in the episode of the anonymous telephone call, to which Gide has given far greater and more obvious importance in the play than it has in the novel. In the latter, the reader is simply informed of the telephone call by means of direct narrative: "K. war telephonisch verständigt worden, dass am nächsten Sonntag eine kleine Untersuchung in seiner Angelegenheit stattfinden würde" (Kafka, p. 28); whereas in the adaptation, the telephone-conversation itself is fully re-enacted with such added, theatrical effects and stage



directions as mime ("Geste, sourire d'acquiescement; mouvement des lèvres de K. . . . pour un assentiment que l'on n'entend pas" [Gide, p. 44]) and uncommon noise effects. ("Soudain une sonnerie beaucoup plus forte immobilise tout le monde et interrompt tous les bruits" [Gide, p. 42]). In this manner Gide tries to emphasize the strange and extraordinary nature of the telephone call which is only very lightly suggested in the narrative, by the incongruency existing between the seemingly legal procedure of the trial--

Man machte ihn darauf aufmerksam, dass diese Untersuchungen regelmässig, wenn auch vielleicht nicht jede Woche, so doch häufiger einander folgen würden. Es liege einerseits im allgemeinen Interesse, den Prozess rasch zu Ende zu führen, anderseits aber müssten die Untersuchungen in jeder Hinsicht gründlich sein und dürften doch wegen der damit verbundenen Anstrengung niemals allzulange dauern (Kafak, p. 28)

--and the unusual day, Sunday, and place, "es war ein Haus in einer entlegenen Vorstadtstrasse, in der K. noch niemals gewesen war" (Kafka, p. 28), where the procedure is to take place. Otherwise, only in relation to K.'s incomprehensible arrest does this telephone call differ from the numerous business calls K. receives during his working hours. In the play Gide transforms the call itself into an extraordinary event by introducing a "Haut-Parleur" who is never seen, but whose arresting voice interrupts the habitual hum-drum of ringing telephones, typewriters and conversations. The silence accompanying this call adds to its extraordinary nature, particularly in contrast to the normal noise of office activity that resumes the moment the caller has hung up. The interruption of K.'s conversation with the "Directeur-Adjoint;" during which the normal activity continues, by the strange arresting call, succeeds in creating a strong dramatic impression, but one which is absent in this episode of Kafka's novel. In addition to the re-enactment of the call, Gide has added another somewhat supernatural element to this scene that also contributes to the air of



fictitious mystery unfamiliar to Kafka's style. The "Haut-Parleur" tells K. that he will not encounter any difficulties and complications if he asks for "le menuisier Lanz" (Gide, p. 47). The impressive manner in which this is said, as well as the source of information, already imply that this is no ordinary name, as it seems to be in the novel, where K. has a plausible reason for inventing it on the spur of the moment:

Da er doch nicht nach der Untersuchungskommission fragen konnte, erfand er einen Tischler Lanz - der Name fiel ihm ein, weil der Hauptmann, der Neffe der Frau Grubach, so hieß - und wollte nun in allen Wohnungen nachfragen, ob hier ein Tischler Lanz wohne, um so die Möglichkeit zu bekommen, in die Zimmer hineinzusehen. (Kafka, p. 31)

Moreover, unlike in the novel, in which no repeated reference is made to the "Tischler Lanz," Gide confirms the suggested magical power of this name, in the scene of the encounter between K. and the washerwoman:

K. "Le menuisier Lanz, s'il vous plaît..."

La Laveuse "Ah! Le mot de passe. C'est vous qui venez pour être interrogé?" (Elle rentre. Tout le mur se soulève lentement et découvre une grande salle voûtée.) [Gide, p. 79]

Gide once more refers mysteriously to the unknown Lanz in the scene with the painter Titorelli:

K. "Avant que je ne vous quitte, vous ne pourriez pas me dire qui est le menuisier Lanz?"

(Eclatement du décor; les praticables des côtés disparaissent. . . )  
Titorelli, "Le menuisier Lanz n'existe pas. C'est un mot de passe." (Gide, p. 183)

Gide has resorted here to an inconspicuous detail in Kafka's text as a means of shortening a long frustrating search, thus making it more compatible with the new dramatic form. In relation to this change, Robert Rochefort, in his article "Une oeuvre liée mot pour mot à une vie," writes:

Un exemple tiré du Procès fait bien voir à la fois cette manière propre de Kafka de dire toujours plus qu'il ne paraît, de dire sans en avoir l'air, de dissimuler l'intention profonde derrière la banalité de l'anecdote et le genre d'appauvrissement et de déformation qu'entraîne inévitablement l'adaptation aux nécessités de la rampe. Dans le texte de Kafka, Joseph K. doit se rendre chez le juge d'instruction qui l'a convoqué, mais il ne connaît pas son adresse. . . . Ainsi le texte de Kafka, sans aucune explication, sans aucun commentaire,



suggère-t-il entre autre, quelque soit la démarch adoptée, si compliquée, si détournée, si déguisée soit-elle, elle vous conduit vers ce juge d'instruction inévitable. L'adaptation théâtrale ne pouvait évidemment respecter les nuances, le juge d'instruction dira lui-même par téléphone à K. . . . que pour se rendre chez lui il n'aura qu'à demander le menuisier Lanz.<sup>14</sup>

Other changes in Act I less apparent than those already dealt with, but none the less significant, are, for example the following: the juxtaposition of scenes which follow the conversation with Frau Grubach; the method employed in the transition of scenes; the manner in which Gide adapted long descriptive scenery passages to the restricted means of the stage; and finally, the meaning of the introduction of a "Chœur des Accusés" in the waiting-room scene.

Gide has stayed close to the original text in adapting K.'s conversation with Frau Grubach to the dramatic form. However, the double scene that follows, in which phrases spoken by K., after he has left Frau Grubach, alternate with words which she speaks to herself, this scene is non-existent in the novel. These separate monologues could be taken to further emphasize the basic lack of understanding and communication which characterize the previous conversation or they could also be understood in the sense in which Simone Benmussa explains them in her article entitled "Travail de scène pour 'Le Procès' (Relevé au cours des répétitions)":

Les deux monologues ne sont pas situés sur le même plan: K. s'analyse, réfléchit, essaye de trouver une suite logique dans ce qui lui arrive, s'essaye à des raisonnements syllogistiques. Mme. Gruebach, elle, plus primaire, n'a pas un vrai monologue, mais une sorte de dialogue avec un personnage imaginaire. Elle reste sur un plan terre à terre. Les répliques de Mme. Gruebach doivent être sur le ton de la conversation, celles de K. sur celui de la réflexion entrecoupée de silences.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Robert Rochefort, "Une oeuvre liée mot pour mot à une vie . . . ,"  
Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeleine Renaud-Jean-Louis Barrault, XX (1957), 41-45.

<sup>15</sup> Simone Benmussa, "Travail de scène pour 'Le Procès,'" Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeleine Renaud-Jean-Louis Barrault, L (1965), 93.



This obvious emphasis on the psychological conflict--the doubt and anxiety--awakened in K. by the morning events and increased by the frustrating conversation and his conscious attempt to win some kind of clarification in his new situation is Gidian rather than Kafkaesque. ("Quand on peut agir comme on veut, c'est qu'on est libre ... Or si je suis libre, c'est que je ne suis pas arrêté. . . . Je crois que je suis libre, mais je sais que je suis arrêté" [Gide, p. 57].) By adding Mme. Grubach's words, Gide further clarifies how basically incomprehensible the whole situation is to the normal, logical, perceptive faculty, for Mme. Grubach is depicted in the novel, as in the play, as "une personne raisonnable" (Gide, p. 59); and she cannot understand why a man who is only "un peu fougueux" (Gide, p. 59) should be arrested without a charge being laid. In this scene, Gide also makes his first apparent reference to the problem of personal liberty, a subject to which he will repeatedly allude throughout the play.

On considering this scene in the context of the whole first act, the purpose for its addition to the play could be interpreted as Gide's attempt to call the audience's attention to the feeling of anxiety that gradually overcomes K. as a result of his frustrated endeavors to find help in justifying his arrest and in explaining his situation. Gide seems to have the same intention when he follows up the conversation with Mlle. Bürstner with the familiar question: "Peut-on se sentir libre . . . ? Croire que l'on est libre et savoir que l'on est arrêté . . . ?" (Gide, p. 71) which ends in an almost inarticulate, incomprehensible mumble-jumble of words and reveals how little clarification of his situation K. has actually won. ("C'est une affaire de réparation . . . de préparation . . . Pour parer à l'accusation . . . l'important c'est de se préparer à la déclaration . . . de la préparation . . ." (Gide, p. 72). In sum, Gide stresses here the



psychological aspect of the conflict--the augmenting anxiety growing out of each new situation. This increasing anxiety can be thought of as being the real dramatic development in the play, because an external development of events is lacking in the sense that none of them bring K. closer to his goal. In the second to last scene he still asks the chaplain "Quelle est donc cette Justice, que tu sers? Parle" (Gide, p. 200) and he is still determined to "chercher de l'aide encore, où que ce soit; et je ne sais où" (Gide, p. 200). The external movement is made up of a succession of scenes illuminating K.'s situation, but never contributing to any visual progress. In a much subtler form this is also the principal development in Kafka's novel. However, the mounting tension of the growing anxiety is less obvious in his text because, as Robert Rochefort says: "Tout se tient tellement ensemble, dans une tension, dans un effort si continu, dans un mouvement intérieur si constant" (Rochefort, p. 43). This constant movement is obviously more easily achieved in a novel than in a play because of the space allotted to descriptions and reflections accompanying the various dialogues and actions like an invisible undercurrent.

On analyzing Gide's method of dealing with scenery changes (that is to say, every change that diminishes or enlarges the size of the stage and not just the changes occurring between Scene 1 and Scene 2 of Act I), it seems as if Gide were attempting to make up for the loss of this epic element. It was the necessity of suppressing long descriptive and reflective passages, of dividing the whole process into Acts and Scenes for dramatic purposes, that forced him into sacrificing much of the timeless continuity so characteristic of Kafka's trial. Just as he attempted to incorporate as much of the essence of these long passages into the play by converting it into such theatrical means as movement, stage design, dialogue and



lighting, Gide could have tried to restore some of the epic continuity by his method of scenery change. Within Act I, a total of at least twelve movements (stage instructions) occur on stage by which part of the visible decor is hidden, or hidden decor is revealed. The significance of these movements is that only once, namely between Scenes 1 and 2, do they bring about a full stop in the action. All other movements of sliding panels, rising and falling walls and curtains, disappearing furniture ("le décor s'évanouit dans les cintres. Des passants enlèvent les meubles [comme des somnambules]" [Gide, p. 76]), and complete light changes, are an integral part of the development on stage. It can be ascertained that by this method Gide creates a feeling of unity and continuity, even though it is within a compressed period of time.

Seen in another context Gide's manner of influencing the space dimensions within which K. moves could at times imply an externalization of a psychological reality. The opening and closing, rising and falling stage-props could be regarded as being functional projections of an inner process. If Jean Starobinski's interpretation of the significance of "les éléments architecturaux, dans les fictions de Kafka," in his article "Le rêve architecte,"<sup>16</sup> is regarded as valid or at least acceptable amongst the many interpretations of Kafka's fiction, then Gide's method, as far as it tries to relate to the subjective reality, must also be regarded as successful. For, in reading the play, one certainly has the impression that this particular method could occasionally be very successful in trans-

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<sup>16</sup> Jean Starobinski, "Le rêve architecte (A propos des intérieurs de Franz Kafka)," Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeleine Renaud-Jean-Louis Barrault, L (1965), 21-29.



lating Starobinski's idea: "L'angoisse crée des espaces où elle s'élance dans l'espoir d'échapper à soi-même; mais ces espaces, c'est elle-même encore, ils n'existent que par elle" (Starobinski, p. 26). For instance, K.'s hope of finding clarification in his matter could be represented pictorially by the wall rising on the password "le menuisier Lanz" and by opening on the courtroom, "une grande salle voutée" (Gide, p. 79), into which K. does not enter, however, because the first official interrogation has been postponed. His attempt, further frustrated by the fickle washerwoman and the passive attitude of everyone whom he encounters, then leads him through a tunnel-like corridor that, in the play, is suddenly revealed as being underneath the platform of the courtroom. ("L'éclairage change, un petit rideau, sous le pont du praticable, s'écarte et découvre la longue perspective d'un couloir" [Gide, p. 93]). In the stage-design, Gide and Barrault have situated a similar tunnel-like corridor underneath K.'s office, through which he has to come guarded "flanqué des trois employés" before reaching his office, where he feels the greatest mental security, because as he explains: "Il y a toujours des clients, des gens qui vont et viennent, des employés; et surtout, en plein travail, j'ai toute ma présence d'esprit" (Gide, p. 58). These stage-designs and the manner of revealing them would most likely be effective in evoking Starobinski's impression: "Un mécanisme de poursuite et de fuite, analogue à celui du rêve, crée partout des corridors, des escaliers, des souentes, qui ont l'air de nous avoir attendus depuis toujours" (Starobinski, p. 26). The mobility of otherwise inert objects projects a feeling of strangeness and insecurity. Thus, the facade of the house across the street from K., represented by a curtain, gives way to reveal the interior of K.'s office: "Le rideau de la maison d'en face disparaît. On voit le praticable qui



s'élève à deux mètres du sol où le bureau de K. . . . à la banque" (Gide, p. 41). Could this not be a pictorial way of revealing the relationship existing between K.'s private and professional life? We are told in the novel: "K. pflegte die Abende in der Weise zu verbringen, dass er nach der Arbeit, wenn dies noch möglich war - er sass meistens bis neun Uhr im Büro - einen kleinen Spaziergang allein oder mit Beamten machte" (Kafka, p. 18)--a relationship that in face of the new conflict suddenly becomes burdensome. The anonymous witnesses watching the police sergeant's interrogation from this very house across the street and the two employees at K.'s bank, also present at this session, could be visual representations of K.'s guilty conscience, which discovers that this close identification can also have its negative aspects, besides being a convenient framework for his life; for, suddenly, everything that has been a part of his habitual life appears to "be across the street," relentlessly prying into and impinging on his very private affairs, like a silent, hostile witness to his dilemma.

Gide's method of scenery change is also a convenient way of solving such problems as significant but short transitional developments can present, as for example K.'s search for the courthouse, in which Kafka goes into a detailed description of the milieu in which it is located. In the play, a wall is dropped to hide the decor of the previous scene, K.'s bedroom. At the same time, it succeeds in isolating K. from his familiar surroundings, confronting him with a cold and impersonal facade, which he tries to penetrate in his endeavor to keep his rendez-vous. With the almost empty stage and the few closed doors, the whole decor takes on a touch of sinister strangeness, which seems to be contradictory to the hustle and bustle, the shouting and laughing, created by the friendly aggressiveness



of the inhabitants hanging out of the "einförmige Häuser, hohe, graue, von armen Leuten bewohnte Mietshäuser" (Kafka, p. 30) in Kafka's novel. But, even if the stylized decor of the adaptation diverges for dramatic reasons from Kafka's very realistic description, it translates in simpler and less time-consuming terms (fewer actors and props) the same frightening experience of unfamiliar and impenetrable surroundings.

Finally, the introduction of a "Chœur des Accusés" in the last scene of Act I, could stem from Gide's interest in the Greek myth and his use of it in his own theatre. Frequently he chose the subjects for his plays from Greek mythology--Oedipe, Prométhée, Philoctète, Thésée, only to name a few. However, he interpreted these myths in a very personal and individual manner. In his opinion, for instance, it is to misjudge or misinterpret the grandeur of these legendary heroes when one sees them as having been led by hasard, circumstance or fate. For him, these heroes never submitted to external forces, but were the victims of a psychological reality. In view of this the reason for Gide's introducing the "Chœur des Accusés" into the play becomes comprehensible. They are the condemned men waiting patiently; they personify, as Simone Benmussa says in her article, "le thème de la honte et de l'humiliation. . . . Ils obéissent à une fatalité administrative, fatalité régie par l'homme." She adds: "Les accusés donnent l'impression d'être un amalgame en mouvement, une espèce de parasitage étouffant" (Benmussa, p. 98). They are the visual representation of the overpowering force, an emanation of the modern world that threatens to submerge K. By making them into an aggressive, mumbling group, instead of the timid silent men which they are in Kafka's novel, Gide stresses the confrontation between them and K., something he repeats, except in a much larger framework, in the climax scene of the play.



Whereas in the "Choer des Accusés" scene K. flees the suffocating external pressure to submit, "à se tenir tranquille," in the climatic scene he challenges its much larger force. It could be that, by this early confrontation, Gide wanted to make the audience aware of the beginning of a significant development in the character of K., a development that might be defined as that gradual individualization of K. which finally leads him to exclaim: "Et vous me laissez seul . . . dans ma nuit" (Gide, p. 199).

The changes that have been dealt with up to this point of the analysis have been illustrated only by examples from Act I of the adaptation. Many of these changes also occur in Act II, but rather than repeat examples of similar changes throughout the play, it would seem preferable now to give examples of other changes that are either non-existent or not important in Act I.



#### ADAPTATION: ACT II OF THE PLAY

Act II opens with the visit of K.'s uncle. Almost to the end of the sixth chapter of the novel, the play follows the text very closely. However, whereas the chapter in the novel ends on a note of growing intimacy in the conversation between K. and Leni, Gide has shortened this conversation by introducing the "négociant" Block. Block's appearance at this stage of the play, instead of, as in the novel, at a much later occasion, namely after K. has had more time to have an insight into the huge, expansive, administrative system of the Court of Law, has two dramatic purposes: By combining parts of chapters six and eight and thus eliminating the necessity of depicting a second visit to the advocate, as in the chapter of the novel entitled "Kaufmann Block Kündigung des Advokaten," it accelerates the development of the novel and contributes to the conversion of the lengthy epic style into a more compact dramatic form; secondly, it adds some plausibility to K.'s very hasty resolution to do without a lawyer, for whereas in the novel Block's account and example only serve to add conviction to K.'s gradually formed resolution to discharge the lawyer of his defense, Block's much earlier presence in the play is probably influential from the beginning and thus explains, to some extent, K.'s hasty decision: "Un avocat ... je ferais peut-être bien d'en prendre un autre, s'il est bien reconnu que celui choisi par mon oncle ne vaut rien" (Gide, p. 142).

In the scene following the initial visit to the lawyer's home, K. is seated in his office. It is early in the day and K. has asked "qu'on me laisse un peu tranquille ce matin" (Gide, p. 140). This recalls the opening phrase of chapter seven entitled "Advokat Fabrikant Maler" which begins:



An einem Wintervormittag - draussen fiel Schnee im trüben Licht - sass K. trotz der frühen Stunde schon äusserst müde, in seinem Büro. Um sich wenigstens vor den unteren Beamten zu schützen, hatte er dem Diener den Auftrag gegeben, niemanden von ihnen einzulassen. (Kafka, p. 84)

This continues for the next ten pages with K.'s recollecting the lawyer's description of the nature of the Court of Law and his advice concerning K.'s defence:

Einzusehen versuchen, dass dieser grosse Gerichtsorganismus gewissermassen ewig in der Schwebe bleibt und dass man zwar, wenn man auf seinem Platz selbstständig etwas ändert, den Boden unter den Füssen sich wegnimmt und selbst abstürzen kann, während der grosse Organismus sich selbst für die kleine Störung leicht an einer anderen Stelle - alles ist doch in Verbindung - Ersatz schafft und unverändert bleibt. (Kafka, p. 89)

Understandably, in the adaptation most of this long narrative had to be left out and, with this omission, many strong elements of the novel were profoundly weakened. For example, there is a weakening of the feeling of prolonged waiting where all hope of progress is frustrated and only the "Auswegslosigkeit des Gerichts" becomes apparent: the impression of endless time elapsing, in which all confrontations end in "Irrgängen" and the futility of any attempt to penetrate such barriers as the corruption of the lower administration. In the play, K.'s demand to be left in peace is followed by a juxtaposition of four scenes evolving simultaneously on the stage, "séparation d'abord, puis finissent par s'enchevêtrer" (Gide, p. 138). First, there is the scene with Leni and the lawyer, played at the bed of Huld; somewhat apart there is Block in his niche, at first talking to himself; there is the Grand Juge in his picture frame; and, finally, there is K. in his office, continually interrupted by business matters. This juxtaposition could be interpreted as an attempt on the part of the adaptors to compensate for omitting the inner monologue of the seventh chapter. Although only a few phrases in this juxtaposition



refer directly to the matter covered in the ten pages of the novel, K. arrives at the same conclusion ("Il importe avant tout d'y voir clair. Je n'ai peut-être pas pris cela assez au sérieux tout d'abord" [Gide, p. 152].) and, as in the novel, he decides to notify the judge of his discharge ("Monsieur l'avocat, eu égard à votre maladie, je venais vous dire que je vous décharge du soin de m'assister" [Gide, p. 149]). Whereas the reflections of the novel go back over a period of perhaps several months (the uncle was wearing a "Panama Hut" on his visit and now it is winter), K.'s divided attention in the play refers back directly to the events of the previous day and to the confusing impressions created in his mind by his encounter with the lawyer, offering support and guidance, and with Block, who points out the futility of his efforts. The juxtaposition of scenes could be regarded as a dramatized externalization of a psychological reality, of a mental process, in which the different characters personify the possible modes of action and the various attitudes that present themselves to K.'s mind in his consideration of his situation. The repeated interruptions of his preoccupation by the outside world, as represented by the "Gros Client," the "Sous-directeur" and the three clients, the fluctuating movement between his office and the lawyer's house, could be interpreted as repeated wanderings of K.'s mind during his working hours. They could also be a dramatization of the words spoken by the "Grand Juge": "Une défense minutieuse, et nulle autre ne saurait avoir de sens, exige la suspension de tout autre travail" (Gide, p. 151).

The addition of the "Grand Juge," a silent spectator in the novel, as an active participant in the dialogue of the play, seems to be a Gidian innovation of the same kind as the "mot de passe." Whereas Gide has frequently reduced the fantastic quality of the novel by destroying the



ambiguity of elements and situations, he has tried to add some of his own less subtle kind of fantasy by, for example, having a portrait come alive: "Et le grand portrait du juge qui domine la situation; mais, dans le cadre, durant un obscurcissement momentané, un juge vivant s'est installé à la place de la peinture" (Gide, p. 138)." Such metamorphosis on stage could, however, also be justified by the idea that, since this whole scene is an externalization of a mental preoccupation with the trial, the "Grand Juge" presiding over the mental process, has become a living reality in K.'s mind.

As a dramatic innovation, this juxtaposition of scenes is most likely an effective means of adding more dramatic tension to the play. The increased number of characters, the continual movement, and the various light changes keep the audience's interest and attention alive better than a lengthy monologue. However, it is also possible that this emphasis on the mechanical aspects and, above all, the seeming suspension of time ("Tout est mûrement réfléchi" [Gide, p. 150] within the period of a morning?) can result in the audience's distraction from the content of the text as well as in its confusion. But with this scene Gide greatly speeds up the whole development of the play, which tends to slow down again in the next scene, entitled "Chez Titorelli."

A tendency toward slapstick can be noticed at the beginning of this scene with the painter. It must have been Barrault who exploited the interplay between the painter Titorelli and the adolescent girls and who turned their aggressiveness into a chase under beds and behind tables, resulting in their being deposited one by one in front of his door. In the novel, only one of the girls manages to squeeze into the room, while the others wait outside. Otherwise the essence of the scene's discussion



has been kept, even though long explanations, such as those concerning the three types of acquittals, have been greatly abridged. Abridgement was necessary especially since, in the play, the following scene presents the climax of the play and the lengthy explanations would have slowed down excessively the dramatic development. The whole episode with Titorelli, which starts out so lively, but which gradually develops into a long elaboration concerning the procedure of the defense, must have posed a serious problem for the dramatists Gide and Barrault, who were aware of the fact that, unlike in the novel, some kind of dramatic climax had to be reached in the play.

The scene that opens before K.'s unbelieving eyes on his taking leave of Titorelli presents this climax. It is the first official court-interview for K., and also the only one in the play, since, after leaving the hearing, and before being executed K. only encounters the chaplain in the cathedral. The scene is a combination of two different episodes in the novel, specifically of chapter eight, entitled "Kaufmann Block, Kündigung des Advokaten," and of chapter two, entitled "Erste Untersuchung." By placing the second chapter at this point in the play, Gide gives to the episode quite a different significance. Whereas, in the novel, this interview seems to be one of many such interviews to come, in the play it is the event toward which all action develops and moves--the final judgement. In the play, K. reaches this point of his trial after having been advised by his uncle, the lawyer, the washerwoman, Block and Titorelli. The words:

Derrière mon arrestation, derrière toutes le manifestations de votre absurde Justice, je sens le réseau d'une vaste organisation qui vous englobe tous, inspecteurs vénaux, brigadiers stupides, depuis les plus infimes subordonnés jusqu'aux Juges du plus haut rang, que nous ne verrons jamais et ne pouvons espérer d'atteindre (Gide, p. 198)



other than in the novel, are based on insight and frustrating experience and carry the weight of a final decision. In Kafka's text, the words "ich schenke euch alle Verhöre" (Kafka, p. 40) are much more the outcome of a spontaneous outburst which K. himself hopes no one has taken seriously:

K. wartete während der nächsten Woche von Tag zu Tag auf eine neuere Verständigung, er konnte nicht glauben, dass man seinem Verzicht auf Verhöre wörtlich genommen hatte, und als die erwartete Verständigung bis Samstagabend wirklich nicht kam, nahm er an, er sei stillschweigend in das gleiche Haus für die gleiche Zeit wieder vorgeladen. (Kafka, p. 40)

In the play, however, the same words ("Je vous fais cadeau de vos interrogatoires, bande de fripouilles que vous êtes. . . . Ne me touchez pas ou je cogne" [Gide, p. 198]) have the force and power of a desperate inner conviction that no help can be sought from the outside, indifferent to the individual's plight that threatens to disturb the peace of the established order:

Chacun de vous dépend de tous et, bien que vous, vous ne soyez pas arrêtés, je vous sens, je vous sais, moins libres que moi. . . . Vous ne songez plus qu'à vous en aller, qu'à partir . . . à reculons . . . comme votre Justice . . . dans l'ombre. Et vous me laissez seul . . . dans ma nuit. (Gide, p. 199)

In this scene, K. reaches the moment of his greatest lucidity in the play, for, in this instance, he recognizes the true nature of the Law with which he has been confronted. He seems, at least for the moment, to apprehend that he is faced by what Emrich calls "die Weltgesetzlichkeit . . . die Welt und ihre Ordnung"<sup>17</sup> and that his trial has raised an existential issue: "Et pourtant ce que nous avons à défendre, c'est notre liberté, c'est notre vie" (Gide, p. 197). In a large gesture, K. rejects all external help and discovers his profound solitude. The revelation of an

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<sup>17</sup> Wilhelm Emrich, Franz Kafka, Athenaeum Verlag GmbH (Frankfurt am Main, 1960), p. 267.

Henceforth references to this work are given by the author's name and the page number.



elaborate and radiant baroque decor accompanies this gesture:

Le décor s'agrandit. Les voûtes se soulèvent et découvrent un rideau peint qui représente une symphonie de robes rouges. Perspectives de colonnes comme dans les plafonds du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, faisant filer l'œil vers le lointain dans une fuite de ciel bleu. (Gide, p. 192)

Such a decor is a radical change from Kafka's dingy, stuffy, crowded room, "das knapp an der Decke von einer Galerie umgeben war, die gleichfalls vollständig besetzt war und wo die Leute nur gebückt stehen konnten und mit Kopf und Rücken an die Decke stiessen" (Kafka, p. 32). Could the elaborate decor not be understood as a more dramatic representation of the moment in the parable "The Man from the Country," in which the waiting man, already old and weak ("nun lebt er nicht mehr lange" [Kafka, p. 156]), discovers "im Dunkel einen Glanz, der unverlöschlich aus der Tür des Gesetzes bricht" (Kafka, p. 156)? Directly in the following scene at the cathedral, Gide refers, however briefly, to the parable and identifies the chaplain with the "Türhüter" and K. with the man from the country: "Pourtant c'est toi que j'attendais, Joseph K..., et cette entrée, je te le dis, n'est faite que pour toi" (Gide, p. 210). It is possible that in this climactic scene Gide indirectly establishes the relationship existing between the destiny of the man from the country and that of K. and thereby makes the play, like the novel, a parable. For both men catch a glimpse of "das Innere des wahren Gesetzes" (Emrich, p. 268). Both are freer than the emissary of the Law ("Bien que vous, vous ne soyez pas arrêtés, je vous sens, je vous sais, moins libres que moi" [Gide, p. 199]) who is bound by his duty to guard the entrance to the Law, and who has the order to allow no one but them to enter. It is, therefore, only up to them to by-pass this servant in order to follow the beam of radiance which they have discovered, but both fail. In the play, this failure is expressed



by the transformation of the radiant decor into the sombre decor of the cathedral, and K.'s significant decision is followed by the exhausted remark "Et puis j'ai besoin de me distraire un peu" (Gide, p. 202). Both believe they must have permission from the "Türhüter" in order to enter. The attention of both is directed not toward the inner radiance, the question of being "wenn der Mensch nach seiner eigenen Daseinsbestimmung fragt" (Emrich, p. 269), but instead is focused on "die drohende Macht und Überlegenheit . . . der Weltordnung" (Emrich, p. 266), personified by the doorkeeper.

The manner in which Gide solves the transition from Titorelli's studio to the courtroom is already the first step in creating the climactic moment. The walls of the prison-like studio give way to reveal the much more spacious courtroom. Simultaneously the feeling of suffocation and nausea, the physical consequence of a psychological state, namely that of utter frustration ("L'aquittement réel, pur et simple, est incontestablement le meilleur; mais j'ajoute aussitôt que je n'ai pas la moindre influence en ce qui concerne cette solution; non plus que, à ma connaissance, personne" [Gide, p. 171]), is momentarily relieved by new hope. But this time, instead of being empty, all the actors whom K. has encountered in the previous scenes are gathered on stage. Thus the sudden, unexpected movement and change in space dimension surrounding K. is already a vital factor contributing to the intensification of tension and suspense, which, because of spiritual anxiety and bodily discomfort, has been slowly increasing in the previous scene.

The reunion of all the familiar characters on stage is another important element that adds to the climactic as well as the theatrical effectiveness of the scene. Such an assembly, only suggested in the novel, implies that



all of the apparently helpful and friendly people like Frau Grubach, Leni, the advocate Huld, the client and Titorelli, whom K. has met individually during the period of his trial, are in reality themselves imprisoned within the huge organization of the Law that now confronts K.

With the combining of scenes, Gide achieves the presentation of two types of condemned men, Block and K. The one prostrates himself and allows himself to be humiliated before the public by the Lawyer into whose hands he has placed the defence of his whole life, the other, K., decides finally to reject all help and to continue the trial without any external assistance. Also, by making the interrogation K.'s and not Block's, who has waited patiently for five years and employed all possible means of support, Gide points out that K. has chosen to do the correct thing, because the only way that one can enter the door into the highest Law is alone. By having the caricaturized, dehumanized slave Block appear simultaneously with K. before the Tribunal, Gide could also create in the audience's mind the impression that K., unlike Block and the men of "Le Choeur des Accusés," has gradually developed into an individual. Perhaps this explains why K. is often referred to as Kafka in the play, an identification which in view of the ending must necessarily be inadequate. This view would then contradict Heinz Politzer, who in his book Franz Kafka Parable and Paradox, calls K. "the modern counterpart (of Everyman), only a protagonist insofar as the spotlight is centered on him rather than on his colleagues."<sup>18</sup> For, unlike his colleagues (Block, etc.) who have completely lost their personal liberty by subordinating their whole

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<sup>18</sup> Heinz Politzer, Franz Kafka Parable and Paradox, Cornell University Press (New York, 1962), p. 201.



existence to external means of support, K. has in the process begun to free himself, even though he never achieves the full freedom necessary to assert himself as an individual in the Gidian sense.

Finally, the change of settings adds another climactic element to this scene. Whereas in the novel, K.'s refusal of further help from the lawyer and Block's humiliation take place in the intimate setting of the lawyer's bedroom, Gide transfers it to a public place, the courthouse. This adds dramatic effectiveness and also a greater significance to the scene for it lends visual support to what Gide has probably made into the central issue of his adaptation:

Au surplus l'affaire qui vous amène me semble particulièrement digne de notre attention; elle a ceci de particulier d'être à la fois très particulière et d'un intérêt quasi général, si je puis dire, car elle touche à la fois à la moralité publique et au comportement privé. (Gide, p. 123)

Considered as a whole, the manner in which Gide has made this lucid moment into a dramatic climax must be regarded as being a clear divergence from the original text. In it K. achieves the highest degree of lucidity not before a large Tribunal and a magnificent decor, but in a dark and empty clearing in the presence of two puppet-like figures.

The short interlude between K. and the "directeur-adjoint" that follows the climatic scene contributes to the idea that in Gide's play K. has gradually developed into a more complex individual than in the novel. Unlike in the novel where K. fears to lose his place in society, "er wollte nicht einmal für einen Tag aus dem Bereich der Arbeit geschoben werden, denn die Furcht, nicht mehr zurückgelassen zu werden, war zu gross" (Kafka, p. 145), his insistence on continuing to take an active part in the events of the world around him stems from a more complicated motive in the play. For here his insistence is mingled with fear as well as with



the need to evade the anguish accompanying the new awareness of his solitude. In retrospect then, the courtroom scene must be regarded as a moment of lucidity in which K. becomes aware of his two levels of existence as an individual. The scene has confronted him with a truth--his solitude within society--but it has not given him the insight, understanding and knowledge to deal with this new truth.

The chaplain scene clarifies this helplessness. It reveals the extent to which K. is still preoccupied with his inner "trial," while trying to fulfill the functions of his outer life. In the play, K. turns to the chaplain on his own accord with a plea for help, whereas in the novel K. approaches the chaplain not with a beckoning gesture, but out of curiosity and "um die Angelegenheit abzukürzen" (Kafka, p. 153).

The most obvious change in Gide's adaptation of the cathedral scene is its greatly reduced length. Missing are K.'s frantic attempts to review his knowledge of Italian, his growing difficulty in concentrating on his work ("Sein früheres gutes Gedächtnis schien ihn aber ganz verlassen zu haben" [Kafka, p. 148]), the complication of understanding the Italian client and his growing anxiety and unrest. Also absent is the long period of waiting, outside and within the cathedral, for the arrival of the client, who in the end does not show up, most likely because it has meanwhile begun to rain heavily. The ambiguous impression of the cathedral created by the description of details that K. notices on his round of the cathedral has also been almost completely destroyed by the abridgement. Significant details such as the altarpiece that portrays a knight who "schien aufmerksam einen Vorgang zu beobachten, der sich vor ihm abspielte" (Kafka, p. 150), a description that echoes the content of Titorelli's portraits of the judges, or the description of the pulpit that recalls the courtroom



and finally the incomprehensible behavior of the church-servant which arouses unusual thoughts in K. ("Was will denn der Mann? dachte K. Bin ich ihm verdächtig? Will er ein Trinkgeld?" [Kafka, p. 150])--these details, common characteristics of the novel that imply a connection between the church and the Law--have been omitted by Gide, again probably for mainly dramatic purposes. In the novel, this long exposition serves to emphasize that K.'s interest in the cathedral is of an esthetic and cultural rather than religious nature: "Wie, wenn er ein Fremder gewesen wäre, der nur die Kirche besichtigen wollte? Im Grunde war er auch nichts anderes" (Kafka, p. 152). This basically distorted attitude could be one explanation of K.'s inability to understand the church-servant's gestures and, later on, the chaplain's advice, for once more K.'s attention is focused on the external rather than the internal meaning, this time in respect to the significance of the cathedral.

Thus Gide has cut this long exposition short and has begun with the encounter between the chaplain and K. But, immediately, several changes can be noticed such as the references to biblical personages and a few phrases with religious connotations. These additions give rise to the impression that André Gide interpreted this episode in Kafka's novel in a predominantly religious (Christian) sense. In the play the chaplain is said to resemble Lacordaire, a French Dominican and friend of Lamennais, who, like Lamennais, was condemned by the pope but later submitted to the Church. Unlike in Kafka's text where the silence is broken with the arresting words "Joseph K.," the scene in the play begins with a sermon addressed to "mes frères." The first words with which the chaplain breaks the dark silence are words taken from the Lamentations of Jeremiah, one of the four great Hebrew prophets who was deeply concerned for the



Israelites, but whom he could not persuade to do penitence and contrition in order to prevent their total ruin. Kafka at no time gives the chaplain religious attributes other than the name of prison chaplain. No sermon points to his religious vocation and duty. No congregation is addressed when he first begins to speak. His words are addressed directly to "Joseph K." In the play, the chaplain appears as a source of comfort and help, whereas in the novel he appears to represent a much more impersonal and overpowering force that arrests K., creating a feeling of guilt and discomfort rather than of confidence and trust. ("Er dachte dran, wie offen er früher immer seinen Namen genannt hatte, seit einiger Zeit war er ihm eine Last, auch kannten jetzt seinen Namen Leute, mit denen er zum erstenmal zusammenkam" [Kafka, p. 153]). Other references with religious connotations are for example the reference made to Job and such phrases as "cherchez et vous trouverez" (Gide, p. 207) and "l'on me châtie, donc je suis coupable" (Gide, p. 208). On a first reading of the play they are inconspicuous details, especially since Gide stays close to the original text in his dramatization of the conversation. However, they are details of great significance in relation to the question of Gide's ability to grasp the fundamental meaning of K.'s trial. His repeated biblical allusions are a clear divergence from Kafka's text, as well as from Kafka's intention, which nowhere in the novel clearly suggest a Christian interpretation--even in the moral or ethical sense. As has already been mentioned at the beginning of this analysis, Gide often employed biblical references not as a believer in metaphysical realities, but rather as a moralist who has recognized unique moral and ethical values in the biblical precepts.

Gide's religious attitude has its origins in his very strict Calvinistic upbringing. However profound and complex the evolution that this early



religiosity underwent during his lifetime, the need for an ideal and the habit of rigorously examining his conscience always remained with Gide. But after his emancipation from the theological teachings of the church which occurred early in his life, Gide never became what could be called an orthodox believer. In order to understand his reasons for introducing religious references into the chaplain scene, his very personal idea of religion and God should first be mentioned. During most of his life, except for his youth, Gide's religious attitude was definitely anti-clerical:

Ce qui m'a éloigné du christianisme c'est ce que trop de chrétiens en ont fait. . . . Je veux dire, éloigné des dogmes que l'homme a bâties sur le christianisme. Je me sens très près du christianisme fondamental, c'est évident. . . . Pour moi, le Christ est la figure la plus authentiquement admirable. (Savage, p. 263)

Toward the end of his life, his marked orientation in the direction of a Goethean, ethical humanism, without theology, reveals Gide's endeavor to reconcile his newly awakened interest in humanity and love for it with his earlier love for the ideal. After 1935, following his disappointing visit to Russia, Gide continually stressed the need for a new spirituality as the only means of saving man from the vulgar materialism and, later, from the chaos of the Second World War. However, this new spirituality was not to be achieved with the help of a metaphysical belief, but was to be based on the discipline of oneself, on self-abnegation and on love, rather than on faith. It was to be a morality that could "à la fois discipliner ses élans, fournir un idéal et justifier ses actes" (Savage, p. 259). It is very likely that the need for such a morality grew out of Gide's personal moral struggle, which lasted for most of his lifetime. In short, this new spirituality was, as Emrich would understand it, based on traditional and conventional principles of humanism, "was man landläufig



unter 'Moral,' Verzicht, Opfer, Liebe, Überwindung von Neigung, Trieben, Leidenschaften, Egoismus, usw. versteht" (Emrich, p. 53). Its attainment depended wholly on man's own efforts "vers le bien, vers le beau . . . ceci, c'est le côté Prométhée, et Christ . . ." (Savage, p. 50). Only by becoming conscious of one's higher self and by trusting in its power to perfect itself can man surpass himself and reach truth. Truth being synonymous for Gide with virtue and God: "Dieu est en l'homme et se réalisera par lui" (Savage, p. 252). He believes that God is latent in every man, but that only through his own conscientious striving can man attain this divinity existing within himself ("Et alors, si vous voulez, j'appelle cet effort de dépassement ou de surpassemement une divinisation de l'homme" [Savage, p. 262]). This new awareness should then awaken in man the need for a new morality. Gide expressed his own religious attitude in his conversations with Robert Mallet as being that of a psychologist and moralist rather than that of a metaphysician ("tout en moi se refuse à la foi" [Savage, p. 264]), whereas Mallet's own impression was that Gide's concepts were marked by "un indéfectible sentiment religieux, fait autant de respect instinctif pour le sacré que du souvenir d'une discipline longtemps influente" (Savage, p. 263). Gide was "un homme en quête de la vérité, qui ne croyait pas à la religion révélée" (Savage, p. 275), but who found in the teachings of Christ many of the values of his humanism. According to Justin O'Brien, Gide "develops a new ethic and a new logic while using forms belonging to the very logic and ethics he is destroying."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Justin O'Brien, Portrait of André Gide A Critical Biography, McGraw-Hill (New York, 1964), pp. 309-10.



For Kafka, who was the son of a Jewish family living in Prague, the Hebrew religion, as his father's generation practised it and believed in it, offered no meaningful content:

Bei Kafka waren allerdings alle religiösen Auseinandersetzungen durch den erstarrt-formalen Ritualglauben seines Elternhauses bedeutend vorbelastet; dem Kind waren die religiösen Veranstaltungen gleichgültig, langweilig und lächerlich. Später wurden Kafka allerdings die fragwürdige Aufklärerei und der mystische Snobismus seiner Umwelt ebenso verdächtig, und so schreitet die religiöse 'Entwicklung,' wenn man davon überhaupt sprechen kann, künftig stets in Richtung auf das Judentum voran - das Christentum hat in ihr kaum eine Rolle gespielt.<sup>20</sup>

If it is thus impossible, in Kafka's case, to speak of an influential religious foundation in the orthodox sense, it is surprising that critics so frequently allude to his religious attitude in interpreting his work. Felix Weltsch, in his book Religion und Humor im Leben und Werk Franz Kafkas, gives us his reasons by referring to the continual preoccupation with the existential situation of man in Kafka's works: "Aus dieser Situation, der Tatsache also, dass das Ich jenem Teil des Seins, der über das Fassbare hinausgeht - der 'Transzendenz' mithin - gegenübersteht, ergeben sich die verschiedenen religiösen Positionen."<sup>21</sup> Kafka himself contributed valuable information on his view of the religious question in writing his aphorisms which, according to Max Brod, were set down between 1917 and 1919. In these writings, Kafka affirms that he believes in a transcendental existence, one that extends beyond the immediate world of the senses, beyond sin, evil, and "Schmutz," "und nur vom Blickpunkt dieser Reinheit, wie sie Kafkas Sehnsucht ist wird das als Schmutz empfunden" (Weltsch, p. 29).

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<sup>20</sup> Klaus Wagenbach, Franz Kafka in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten, Rowohlt (Hamburg, 1965), p. 71.

<sup>21</sup> Felix Weltsch, Religion und Humor im Leben und Werk Franz Kafkas, Herbig Verlagsbuchhandlung (Berlin, 1957), p. 51. Henceforth references to this work are given by the author's name and the page number.



Kafka defines it as "das Sein, das geistige Sein, das Unzerstörbare und das Paradies" (Weltsch, p. 68) which are within man, hidden behind and within the more vulgar self of the sense and which, therefore, unlike the God of the Christian and Hebrew religions does not confront man as "ein ganz anderes 'drohend oder liebend ihm gegenüberstehendes höchstes Wesen'" (Emrich, p. 55). Faith, then, for Kafka means this "Unzerstörbare in sich befreien, oder richtiger: sich befreien, oder richtiger: unzerstörbar sein, oder richtiger: sein" (Weltsch, p. 68). In Emrich's opinion, "hat damit Kafka den Glauben an einen persönlichen Gott als eine unbewusste Verdeckung des ursprünglicheren Glaubens an das Unzerstörbare im Menschen bezeichnet, als einen Ausdruck dafür, dass dieses Unzerstörbare und das Vertrauen zu ihm dem Menschen 'verborgen' bleibt" (Emrich, p. 55). By dismissing every concrete designation of the divinity Kafka widens the gulf between the concrete moral and ethical man and this abstract power to the extent that it becomes an insurmountable barrier, which cannot be crossed by conscious effort, or by the power of imagination and which will, therefore, always present itself as the unknown, the unattainable. As states Weltsch: "Seine Helden erleiden, wie in einem Traum, was ihm selber bewusst ist, denn 'wach, überwach, noch lange nicht wach genug' ist sein Gewissen" (Weltsch, p. 30). Herein, for Kafka, is the meaning of original sin, the cause of man's fall from paradise:

Die Erbsünde, das alte Unrecht, das der Mensch begangen hat, besteht in dem Vorwurf, den der Mensch macht und von dem er nicht ablässt, dass ihm ein Unrecht geschehen ist, dass an ihm die Erbsünde begangen wurde. (Emrich, p. 57)

It is up to each man to recognize that it is impossible to live without being guilty, because, according to Kafka, the very limits of man's consciousness make him guilty every moment that he lives. But this is



not guilt in the moral, ethical sense, and it is, therefore, impossible to combat it in the conventional manner. Kafka only depicts this human situation; he does not give a solution to the problem, even though his parable of the doorkeeper does suggest a possibility, stated somewhat more clearly in one of his aphorisms:

Manchmal scheint es so: du hast diese Aufgabe, hast zu ihrer Ausführung soviel Kräfte als nötig sind. . . . Wo ist das Hindernis für das Gelingen der ungeheuren Aufgabe? Verbringe nicht die Zeit mit Suchen des Hindernisses, vielleicht ist keines da. (Weltsch, p. 72)

In comparing the religious attitudes of Gide and Kafka, one can understand why Reinhard Kuhn wrote:

Malgré sa relative insensibilité à l'humour noir et à l'absurde, Gide se reconnaissait plus ou moins dans les personnages de Kafka, en tant que héros qui cherchent à se dépasser et qui finalement échouent, mais plus encore en tant qu'ils ont mauvaise conscience. Gide a pu trouver aussi, dans l'œuvre de Kafka--et il le dit expressément dans son Journal--une lutte qui était aussi la sienne entre la clarté et les ténèbres, entre la raison et le cauchemar.<sup>22</sup>

In spite of these similarities, a fundamental difference separates the religious attitude of the two authors. Gide is a moralist and humanitarian who believes in creating his own values and ideals and in realizing them, whereas Kafka must be considered more of an idealist, in the sense that he strives for ideals unattainable in this existence ("en fait d'acquittement réel qu'il ne n'a pas été donné d'en rencontrer jamais un seul" [Gide, p. 172]). However, both men believe that the ideal lies in man himself and can only be approached through man's efforts. If man fails to surpass himself, if he fails to reach his goal, his failure, according to Gide, is due to his moral and ethical weakness in evading his own moral responsibility. Kafka, for whom the ideal exists beyond the ethical

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<sup>22</sup> Reinhard Kuhn, Entretien sur André Gide sous la direction de Marcel Arland et Jean Mouton, Mouton (Paris, 1967), p. 172.



sphere, seems to suggest that the fault for man's failure lies beyond the faculty of human comprehension. Although in one of his definitions of original sin ("die Erbsünde, das alte Unrecht, das der Mensch macht und von dem er nicht abläßt, dass ihm ein Unrecht geschehen ist, dass an ihm die Erbsünde begangen wurde" [Emrich, p. 57]) Kafka also appears to allude to man's attempt to elude responsibility, his idea of responsibility remains something that transcends the "Vorschriften der Gesetze und die Motive der Vernunft. . . . Es ist ein Akt der Entscheidung, der über die Vernunft hinausgeht, der die Ratio transzendent" (Weltsch, p. 57).

The marked religious overtones in Gide's adaptation of the cathedral episode could at first create the impression that Gide is being strongly ironical. He seems to mock the submission, prostration, and subordination which are inherent in the Christian faith and which the Church advocates and exploits. However, such irony does not appear to be Gide's purpose in introducing religious connotations. He appears to be much more concerned with adding precision to the suggested ambiguity (in the novel) of the chaplain's character and duty although, at first, it may seem that, to the contrary, Gide destroys this ambiguity by giving the chaplain definitely religious attributes at the beginning of the cathedral scene. But, by clearly identifying the chaplain with the doorkeeper ("Sentinelle, on me confie la garde d'une porte afin d'en interdire l'entrée" [Gide, p. 210]) in an attempt to integrate the parable and the plot, Gide manages to re-establish ambiguity in a much less subtle and more obvious procedure. Thus, the words which the chaplain pronounces take on a paradoxical sense, which the individual himself must decipher: "Tu te trompes sur la Justice. Comprends d'abord qui je suis. Tu es l'Aumonier des prisons, m'as-tu dit. Et à ce titre j'appartiens à la Justice" (Gide, p. 210). Depending on



the individual's awareness of his situation, the words can be interpreted on two different levels. As someone whose beliefs and ideas have been molded by society and its institutions, such as the church for example, the biblical words "ce qui te prosterne te magnifie" and "l'on me châtie, donc je suis coupable" (Gide, p. 208) can only mean one thing: resign yourself to the mercy of the church. That is how K. interprets the chaplain's words; for, in spite of the previous moment of lucidity, K. has not fully penetrated the true nature of this Justice and in his despair and utter helplessness he turns back to those sources of support and help familiar to him: "Mon père, je vous entendis, et je suis dans une grande détresse" (Gide, p. 205). However, the chaplain's advice can only deepen K.'s frustration, since it seems to demand from him a confession of sin, which he cannot justify in terms of the logical routine life he has been leading. The chaplain's words only heighten in K. the feeling that he is the victim of a grave and unreasonable injustice and against this he rebels: "Je ne suis pas coupable . . . à moins que tous les hommes ne le soient. La Justice commet une erreur" (Gide, p. 207). By changing K.'s attitude to the chaplain from one of curiosity ("da jetzt alles offen geschehen konnte, lief er - er tat es auch aus Neugierde und um die Angelegenheit abzukürzen - mit langen fliegenden Schritten der Kanzel entgegen" [Kafka, p. 153]) to one of pleading and searching for help, and also by stressing the religious nature of the chaplain, Gide probably wanted to underline how, in K.'s conventional and distorted way of thinking, the church has become just another pillar of society, there to calm the individual's anxiety and to put his mind at ease ("Ne me diras-tu rien pour calmer mon inquiétude?" [Gide, p. 210]), instead of being, as in its original sense, the place for quiet and conscientious examination of oneself in the



presence of an incomprehensible power. K.'s attitude leads to one kind of interpretation of the chaplain's words, leaving another possible interpretation open to the individual who, unlike K., does not flee the doubt and incertitude accompanying his new awareness, but who discovers in the words "c'est de ton inquiétude que tu dois faire ton assurance. Tu dois te dire: je suis traqué; je suis élu" (Gide, p. 211) insight, strength and, consequently, a new sense of responsibility through the experience of suffering and anguish. No one, however, can help the individual in his struggle for understanding. Whether he accepts the full responsibility for the consequences of his growing consciousness or whether, like K., he remains blind to the truth contained in the advice given him and continues to seek justification for his human condition outside of himself, thus evading his own responsibility, depends only on him. Gide and Kafka seem to be in agreement up to this point. Both believe that "Être soi, c'est se choisir coupable" (Goth, p. 204); but, whereas for Kafka this admission signifies "Totalschuld," "die ganze Schuld des Daseins," which can only be atoned for by a total sacrifice of this existence, Gide is much less extreme and more compromising in a humanitarian sense. Kafka evokes a feeling of utter desolation and "malaise" in his portrayal of the irrevocable absurdity of the human condition, where guilt and existence, death and salvation are identical, and where any attempt to free "das reine Sein" in the human being must necessarily be frustrated during his terrestrial existence. For Gide whose "souci est tout terrestre," the knowledge of the absurdity of the human condition can be made bearable in this life by consciously affirming it and by striving, through this new awareness, to become a more ethical man:



En quatrième lieu, Gide annonce la venue d'une génération où l'on reconnaît l'absurde qui caractérise la condition humaine et où on se propose d'élever sur ce même absurde une éthique humaniste extrêmement généreuse et exigeante. (Savage, p. 270)

For Gide, saying "no," negating this human condition, means evading one's moral responsibility:

Ajoutant ainsi à ta faute première, une autre faute plus grave: celle de te prétendre innocent et, par là, d'accuser l'accusateur afin de te disculper toi-même. C'est ainsi que L'Éternel disait à Job: Est-ce que tu me condamnes afin que tu sois justifié? (Gide, p. 207)

Kafka has no response to the question: How is it possible to live in the face of the absurd? He can only insist that it is man's responsibility to take upon himself the full consequence of his fundamental guilt and that he can only seek salvation through his own annihilation. Thus, through the chaplain's words, which are Gide's not Kafka's ("C'est de ton inquiétude que tu dois faire ton assurance. Tu dois te dire: je suis traqué; je suis élu" and "les ténèbres resplendissent et ce qui te prosterne te magnifie" [Gide, p. 211]). Gide reveals a much more positive attitude towards man's basically absurd situation than does Kafka. For, whereas Kafka envisages the problem of the absurdity of life, Gide moves one step further and introduces the principles of existential conduct. The individual becomes the arbiter of his own values, for he has discovered a new truth to which others are as yet blind. With this new awareness comes a new responsibility not only to oneself, but also to those around one ("l'être pour autrui" of Sartre). In this respect Gide establishes a relationship between Le Procès and existential theatre.

The final scene of the play best exemplifies this divergence in the attitude of the two writers toward the problem of the human condition, even though Gide's rapid ending prevents it from becoming as convincing a con-



clusion as it could have been. Technically, he has shortened the length of the last episode to such an extent that he has interrupted the whole logical train of development which in Kafka's text leads up to a convincing conclusion. In the adaptation, the final statement comes as a surprise because Gide has not substituted any other means of transition between the chaplain scene and K.'s concluding remark. A short comparison between the ending of the novel and that of the play is perhaps necessary to support this statement.

Nothing at the end of the ninth chapter of the novel, entitled "Im Dom," indicates as yet that K. has understood the meaning of the chaplain's words or the significance of their encounter. His primary concern is still for his job at the bank: "Gewiss, ich muss fortgehen. Ich bin Prokurist einer Bank, man wartet auf mich, ich bin nur hergekommen, um einem ausländischen Geschäftsfreund den Dom zu zeigen" (Kafka, p. 161). K.'s attitude of expectation at the beginning of the final chapter must, therefore, be interpreted in the same manner as his waiting at the beginning of the third chapter. He expects to be summoned to another hearing. However, the strange appearance and behavior of the visitors ("K. gestand sich ein, dass er einen anderen Besuch erwartet hatte" [Kafka, p. 162]). above all, their odd manner of treating him, already calls forth an intellectual aloofness in K. ("Das einzige, was ich jetzt tun kann ist, bis zum Ende den ruhig einteilenden Verstand behalten" [Kafka, p. 163]). that leads to reflections about his present situation and considerations as to the manner of dealing with it. Thus, during his walk to the place of execution, Kafka depicts how K.'s attitude gradually undergoes a transition from "ich gehe nicht weiter" to "bloss die Wertlosigkeit seines Widerstandes kam ihm gleich zum Bewusstsein," ending in "alle drei zogen



nun in vollem Einverständnis" (Kafka, p. 164). On one occasion Kafka himself explained that whoever does not recognize the law that leads to the "innere Freiheit" and "Erlösung" must be dragged and whipped into recognition. Could the final theatrical episode then not be regarded as a method of illumination--the whole fantastic pantomime being nothing but a short re-enactment of K.'s year-long process of questioning and resisting? Because it seems so strange, so far removed from reality, the whole procedure evokes in K. a detached and reflective attitude and, because there is no one else except K. to interpret the silent gestures and actions, he is forced to answer his own questions: "Ich bin dafür dankbar, dass man mir auf diesem Weg diese halbstummen, verständnislosen Herren mitgegeben hat, und dass man es mir überlassen hat, mir selbst das Notwendige zu sagen" (Kafka, p. 164). And so he gradually begins to realize that in his former existence, in his life of routine, he had evaded exactly this issue--the silent confrontation with himself and the question of his being: "Ich wollte immer mit zwanzig Händen in die Welt hineinfahren und überdies zu einem nicht zu billigenden Zweck. Das war unrichtig" (Kafka, p. 163). He also knows that with this silent performance he has arrived at the end of his trial ("Soll man mir nachsagen dürfen, dass ich am Anfang des Prozesses ihn beenden wollte, und jetzt an seinem Ende, ihn wieder beginnen will? Ich will nicht, dass man das sagt" [Kafka, p. 163]) and that it is his duty to accept the inevitable consequences of the process instead of continuing to seek help and justification outside of himself. This final evolution of K.'s thoughts leads to the logical reasoning:

K. wusste jetzt genau, dass es seine Pflicht gewesen wäre, das Messer, als es von Hand zu Hand über ihm schwebte, selbst zu fassen und sich einzubohren. Aber er tat es nicht, sondern drehte den noch freien Hals und sah umher. Vollständig konnte



er sich nicht bewähren, alle Arbeit den Behörden nicht abnehmen, die Verantwortung für diesen letzten Fehler trug der, der ihm den Rest, der dazu nötigen Kraft versagt hatte (Kafka, p. 165).

This reflection reveals his awareness of the essence of man's being, his inability to transcend the realm of his consciousness, to move beyond the sphere of his logical comprehension to which the idea of "Selbstgericht" belongs. He knows that it is his instinctive urge to live within the natural and "sinful" confines of his awareness and his fear of the unknown, which the "Unzerstörbare im Menschen" presents, that prevent him from executing the sentence himself. He lacks the strength for the faith in his own being. It is this lack which causes him to die like a dog ("Josef K. hat die Erkenntnis gewonnen, dass er die 'Pflicht' hat, das Selbstgericht über sich zu vollstrecken. Das ist das Höchste, was auf Erden erreicht werden kann" [Emrich, p. 297]).

In the play, Gide has omitted K.'s waiting for the visitors and the long walk to the place of execution during which the whole significant development of K.'s thoughts takes place. Whether he did so for dramatic reasons, believing these events to be too long, or whether he left them out because he was unwilling to follow a line of reasoning so contrary to his own, is impossible to establish. Most likely the result must be considered to be a combination of both possibilities. The last scene opens with the encounter between K. and the two "cops" or "jailers" ("argousins"). K. appears to have just left the cathedral and nothing indicates that he harbours any thoughts of resistance or evasion, or any ideas or considerations as to the meaning of the "cops'" actions. On the contrary, K.'s attitude at the end of the play must be characterized by a feeling of resignation, the passive acceptance of an incomprehensible fate, which takes on the unrealistic appearance of the two "cops." Faced



with this abrupt ending of his trial, K.'s thoughts suddenly move beyond his own feeling of anxiety and frustration and take his uncle's feelings into consideration: "Tout de même . . . si mon pauvre oncle voulait cela, ça lui ferait peut-être de la peine" (Gide, p. 213). Whereas, throughout the trial, he had gradually developed the feeling that he was the suffering victim of ethical and moral injustice and of the indifference of his surroundings ("ne songez plus qu'à vous en aller, qu'à partir . . . à reculons . . . comme votre Justice . . . dans l'ombre. Et vous me laissez seul . . . dans ma nuit" [Gide, p. 198]), the final scene reveals that K. has progressed to a new level of awareness from the one at the end of the climax-scene, for now his considerations have moved beyond the limits of a preoccupation with his own, egocentric problem ("ça n'est pas tant pour moi" [Gide, p. 214]) to a concern for the moral and ethical principles of mankind ("c'est plutôt une question de principes" [Gide, p. 214]). Gide's K. has discovered the principle of the whole issue of the trial (Gide's idea of the trial), but, unlike Kafka's hero, he has not yet arrived at the knowledge of his own obligation and responsibility in this matter. It appears as if his thoughts are striving in this direction ("Si du moins . . . Que veux-tu dire? . . . Rien" [Gide, p. 214]), but it is too late. Through this new awareness K. has come to the threshold of a new level of terrestrial existence, but too late, for he has already resigned himself to death. To Gide, whose interest was of an existential nature, K.'s death should only seem to be the illogical outcome of K.'s trial. For Kafka it is the only logical solution possible to man's desire to surpass himself. For Gide, man can attain fulfilment only through ethical and moral endeavors, not by annihilation. It is important to note that, in Gide's adaptation, no mention is made of K.'s duty to kill



himself as the greatest goal of earthly achievement. In view of this difference the whole ritual ceremony takes on a different meaning. In the play, it becomes a sacrificial ceremony in which K. is sacrificed to the banality and total indifference of the life that he himself has led previous to his arrest ("Oh! regarde . . . Qu'est-ce qu'on va lui faire? . . . C'est très curieux . . . Viens ma chérie. C'est des affaires de Justice. Ça ne nous regarde pas" [Gide, p. 216]), whereas, in the novel, the ritual must be interpreted as being the preparation for the moment of the greatest test of man's dignity on earth. K. fails, in both the novel and in its adaptation, but in the play his failure is presented as a human failing, an ethical and moral weakness, while in the novel it is due to the lack of an "inhuman" strength which was never given to K. ("die Verantwortung für diesen letzten Fehler trug der, der ihm den Rest der dazu nötigen Kraft versagt hatte" [Kafka, p. 165]). Both heroes die a miserable death. But whereas Kafka's hero dies because he has failed his highest test as a human being, in Gide's adaptation the ending is less convincing. For until almost the end of the play, Gide leads one to believe that K.'s trial, his evolution as an individual, should have been a parable leading to life, instead of, as for Kafka, to death. One explanation for this ending could be that Gide did not want to diverge too obviously from the original text, even though he was being thoroughly inconsistent in his manner of doing it. Another possible explanation for this ending could be that it presented a convenient solution for Gide's incorporating a moral lesson for the benefit of an indifferent world, which is thus made as much responsible for K.'s death as K. himself, who missed the right moment to pass through "la porte étroite," the moment when the chaplain made him aware of it: "Et cette entrée, je te le dis, n'est faite



que pour toi" (Gide, p. 210). Gide, after reading Le Procès in 1941, noted in his Journal: "L'angoisse que ce livre respire est par moments presque intolérable; car comment ne pas se dire: cet être traqué, c'est moi?" He discovered in Kafka's depiction of the existential problem an aspect of great significance and truth for himself. It is very possible that he interpreted K.'s death as being the result of the problem defined in his novel La porte étroite: "Efforcez-vous d'entrer par la porte étroite, car la porte large et le chemin spacieux mènent à la perdition, et nombreux sont ceux qui y passent. Mais étroite est la porte et resserrée la voie qui conduisent à la Vie, et il en est peu qui les trouvent."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> André Gide, La porte étroite, Mercure de France (Paris, 1950), p. 21.



## AFFINITY WITH THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD

The horrifying experience of the Second World War had a profound influence on the French theatre. Not only did it give rise to the need to express the new feelings, doubts, and thoughts which grew out of shattered illusions and the loss of the belief in traditional values, but a new form was necessary in which to express these changing attitudes and values. The traditional form of the literary theatre, with its rational approach, proved inadequate for the expression of the overpowering emotions which the impact of the war had created. At the time, only the cinema was able to bear witness to the catastrophe; it did so in the form of documentary films, in which words were not necessary to explain and describe the terrible facts, but only to state them. Thus, the cinema anticipated many innovations of the new theatre. For example, the classical idea of the unities of time, place, and action was often replaced by a juxtaposition of images, evoking a universally human situation rather than a precise situation in time and space or a logical presentation of the development of events. The theatre esthetic, formerly "closed" in the wake of nineteenth-century literary realism, now "opened up."

The writers of this time were forced first of all to re-orientate themselves in respect to the universal tragedy. Writers such as Sartre and Camus tried to express the senselessness of the human situation in philosophical terms, in the conventional manner of a logical exposition of the problem and an attempt to arrive intelligently at a solution. From the point of view of the theatre, both men can be considered moralists rather than dramatists, for they considered the theatre as a vehicle for presenting, testing, and popularizing their philosophical ideas. Geneviève Serreau writes of this theatre: "A aucun moment, ils ne tentent



d'en révolutionner la forme et les structures versant avec insouciance leur vin nouveau dans les vieilles outres du théâtre traditionnel."<sup>24</sup> Their most important contribution to the new theatre was their grappling with the consuming post-war re-examination of the human condition. More than any others Sartre and Camus made this preoccupation the subject of serious theatre in France.

Besides the existential theatre of Sartre and Camus, another important trend in the French theatre during the 40's was the "poetic avant-garde." This trend also involved the new views on human existence, but it relied much on fantasy, dream, hallucination, and burlesque, frequently employing music-hall, circus, and puppet-theatre elements (Anouilh, Audiberti, Schéhadé). Many of the characteristics of this theatre became an integral part of the "theatre of the absurd." The "poetic avant-garde," although in some ways like the "theatre of the absurd," tended to disregard such conventional elements as plot and consistency of character. More lyrical than the "theatre of the absurd," plays of this kind continued to be written at the same time as "theatre of the absurd" dramatists such as Beckett, Ionesco and Genet were writing their major works. However, the esthetic purpose which they all had in common was to destroy the hold which the conventions of the realistic and naturalistic tradition still had on the French theatre. But it was not until the 1950's and 60's that plays which rejected all compromise with dramatic tradition and convention were regularly produced on the stages of France.

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<sup>24</sup> Geneviève Serreau, Histoire du "Nouveau Théâtre," Gallimard (Paris, 1966), p. 26.



In his book The Theatre of the Absurd, Martin Esslin calls the dramatic adaptation of Der Prozess by Jean-Louis Barrault and André Gide the first play that

fully represented the Theatre of the Absurd in its mid-twentieth century form. It preceded the performances of the work of Ionesco, Adamov, and Becket, but Jean-Louis Barrault's direction already anticipated many of their scenic inventions and united the traditions of clowning, the poetry of nonsense, and the literature of dream and allegory. As one bewildered critic put it at the time, "This is not a play so much as a sequence of images, phantoms, hallucinations." (Esslin, p. 254)

Leonard Pronko, in his book Avant-Garde: The Experimental Theatre in France, also refers to the kinship of this play with the "theatre of the absurd" of the 50's:

Franz Kafka, presented in dramatic form by Dullin's disciple Barrault, in the Gide adaptation of The Trial (1947), evokes a nightmare world resembling that of Beckett, Ionesco, and of Adamov, in which we find ourselves helpless, confronted by inexplicable and frustrating experiences that are strangely similar to everyday life.<sup>25</sup>

Maja Goth, Heinz Politzer, and André Frank, all extremely critical of the adaptation, seem to have received an impression similar to that of the bewildered critic mentioned by Esslin; and they all explain it by referring to elements very characteristic of the theatre of the absurd. For Politzer, Kafka's hero becomes a "withered dancer on the avenues of our sorrow" (Politzer, p. 334), and for Maja Goth he is changed into a

Charlot véloce sachant exprimer ses angoisses et ses cauchemars par le langage des muscles et par une surprenante mimique ne semblant plus guère sortir du monde silencieux et uniforme de Kafka. De même les sonneries, le haut-parleur, les multiples effets d'éclairage créent un univers de fantômes dont la variété et le mouvement n'ont plus rien à voir avec l'atmosphère morte du Procès authentique. (Goth, p. 249)

<sup>25</sup> Leonard Pronko, Avant-Garde: The Experimental Theatre in France, University of California Press (Berkeley, 1962), p. 17.



André Frank, in his article "Il y a dix ans . . . ,"<sup>26</sup> questions the adaptation's validity as a theatrical performance when he writes: "Le spectateur se demande si le côté presque sportif de cette grande nécessité technique appartient vraiment au théâtre. On constate ailleurs. C'est à la fois du cinéma, du ballet, de la pantomime." J.-L. Barrault's "free, fluid, and grotesquely fantastic style of production in which he fused Kafka's work with a style in which he himself had been nurtured and which is in direct literary and stage lineage of the theatre of the absurd--the tradition of the iconoclasts: Jarry, Apollinaire, the Dadaists, some of the German Expressionists, the Surrealists, and the prophets of a wild and ruthless theatre, like Artaud and Vitrac (Esslin, p. 254).

seemed to these critics to have been inappropriate for conveying Kafka's atmosphere and spirit. Disregarding for the moment the negative or positive nature of these criticisms and simply examining instead the points which have been enumerated in their criticisms, one arrives at the conclusion that the means of visual expression had a far greater effect on the audience than did the literary content of the play. In fact one of the major complaints of many critics was the difficulty which they had in grasping the literary content of the play due to the "perfection matérielle" of Barrault's production. Thus André Frank wrote: "Je suis sorti du Procès l'autre soir, tout pris d'une admiration si gênante pour M. Barrault . . . que Kafka et son message s'en trouvaient repoussés à l'arrière plan" (Frank, p. 31). This aspect of the adaptation must be attributed to two main causes. Much of the literary content--many of the reflections, the descriptions, and some scenes--had necessarily to be condensed. What was said in a page or two of the novel is suggested by

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<sup>26</sup> André Frank, "Il y a dix ans . . . ,"Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeleine Renaud-Jean-Louis Barrault, XX (1957), 30-37.



only one sentence; complete scenes are omitted, or the familiar order of scenes is rearranged more economically for the stage, and put into a more compact form in order to be dramatically effective. Gide was thus frequently forced to destroy much of the originality of Kafka's style by stating precisely, in one or two sentences, that which Kafka only implied or suggested in a whole page or two. In this manner, much of the ambiguity is lost to a simplified Gidian interpretation. The point frequently made by Kafka experts, namely that Kafka's writings cannot be staged, could find its justification here. As an example of this loss in transposition from one literary form to another, one can well imagine much of the subtlety and the peculiar Kafkaesque manner of moving without really advancing, as in a dream, being necessarily sacrificed to the dramatic form and tempo. However, there is another aspect of Kafka's writings almost as important as the problems, questions, and ideas which he evokes and this is the strongly visual aspect of his work and the images which elicit them. These visual impressions lend themselves effectively to a dramatic presentation, particularly of the kind of the "theatre of the absurd," for such theatre relies heavily, if not primarily, on the visual representation of thoughts and ideas. Thus, what has been left out in Gide's literary translation is often replaced or at least supplemented by J.-L. Barrault's style of production. In this way, absurd elements inherent in Kafka's own writings are given form and are materialized in the process.

However, Jean-Louis Barrault's mise en scène cannot alone be made responsible for the emphasis on the absurd which is inherent in the play, for André Gide also, by his literary interpretation, contributed significantly even though less obviously to the materialization and crystallization on



stage of the problem of the absurdity of the human condition, a fundamental problem in Kafka's text. Gide's interpretation creates, what could be called the play's affinity with existential theatre. Although far from being an Existentialist himself, Gide felt sympathetic to many of the basic ideas of existential philosophy, such as the responsibility of the individual to mankind, the struggle for personal freedom, the necessity of self-sincerity, the preoccupation with the individual's conscience, and the feeling of anguish arising from an aspiration to attain and fulfil these ideals in an existence that is absurd. Throughout the play, Gide's intermittent insertions of K.'s conscious attempts to come to terms with his situation, as for example after the conversations with Frau Grubach and Fräulein Bürstner, as well as his long speech in the climax-scene, are examples of the manner in which Gide resorts to now familiar existential statements or allusions in trying to clarify K.'s confrontation with the existential situation. But it is specifically in the change at the end of K.'s evolution, the moral slant which Gide has given to the play by changing the meaning of K.'s death, that he has turned the whole adaptation toward the existential theatre. In spite of this affinity, Le Procès cannot be called "existential theatre," for unlike Camus's Le Malentendu or Jean-Paul Sartre's Les Mouches, for example, it does not logically and philosophically formulate the idea of the absurdity and irrationality of the human situation. Whereas these two plays are primarily literary pieces in dramatic form serving as a popular medium of expression for philosophical speculations, Le Procès tends more toward the "theatre of the absurd," which, like the existential theatre, deals also with the irrationality of human existence, but unlike it, dispenses with "rational devices and discursive thought" (Esslin, p. XX) and seeks to convey the



same absurd feeling by non-rational means such as mime, dance, music, and nonsense-verse. Le Procès does not methodically probe, analyse, define, or solve the problematic situation in which the hero finds himself to as great an extent as the plays of Camus and Sartre. If there is in Le Procès any indication at all as to the kind of guilt from which the hero suffers or of the reason for it, such indication is due to the already mentioned innovations which Gide introduced into the adaptation. In concluding, it can be said that elements of existential theatre are present in the play in as far as it presents the dilemma of modern man whose traditional and religious beliefs are no longer intact and are, therefore, unable to serve him as crutches; left alone, he faces the task of justifying his human existence within a new context of undefined values.

Jean-Louis Barrault's production moves closer to the "theatre of the absurd" mainly because there is a shift of emphasis from the spoken language of drama to visible action and images. This action cannot, however, be defined in the traditional sense of progressive action leading from one event to the next, i.e. events in sequence with a definite beginning and a definite end, since nothing ever really happens that would logically result in the next event. As Barrault writes: "Rien apparemment ne se passe; au contraire ce qui se passe c'est Rien. . . . Rêver qu'on court mais qu'on n'avance pas."<sup>27</sup> The visual action begins with the arrest of Josef K. in the midst of his banal and daily routine. No reason or explanation is given, but K.'s human existence has been put in question by an unknown and incomprehensible power; and, henceforth, K. seeks to

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<sup>27</sup> Jean-Louis Barrault, Une troupe et ses auteurs, (Paris, 1950), p. 111.



find a justification for this "accusation." The play presents a number of situations--basic situations that forever repeat themselves--in which the hero finds himself in search of this justification. The repetition arises out of the fact, as Adamov explains it in "Une fin et un commencement," that "behind its visible appearances, life hides a meaning that is eternally inaccessible to penetration by the spirit that seeks for its discovery, caught in the dilemma of being aware that it is impossible to find it, and yet impossible to renounce the hopeless quest" (Esslin, p. 51). Consequently, K.'s hope ends each time in frustration. These situations serve to illuminate his growing anxiety, the emotional intensification that arises out of the absurdity of his position; and it is this intensification that provides the real action of the play. From being annoyed to slightly amused, from doubting the seriousness of the whole incident to a slight uneasiness, from feigned indifference ("Oui, mais je ne prend pas cela bien au sérieux" [Gide, p. 80]) the intensification finally leads to frightened despair: "Oh venez avec moi. Montrez moi le chemin. Il y en a tant. Je crains de me tromper" (Gide, p. 97). The effect is often traumatic, as Barrault notes, because the obsessive emotional intensification moves like an undercurrent, for the most part beneath the level of K.'s consciousness. "Traduire au théâtre cette action terrifiante; le Rien" (Barrault, Une troupe . . ., p. 112) to solve this almost insoluble problem was Barrault's passionate endeavor. Pol Quentin is of the opinion that Kafka himself, in his letters, furnishes guidance for the eventual adapter by indicating the elements of this action as being those of a "débutante en patinage [qui] court après les réalités . . . et qui pour comble aurait en l'idée de choisir



pour ses exercices un lieu interdit."<sup>28</sup> And Quentin goes on to interpret this phrase as representing the externalization of an inner conflict, of "l'histoire de K., de ses chutes, ses rélèvements de plus en plus pénibles" (Quentin, p. 15). In his opinion, the adapter could visualize the despairing endeavors of K. by giving to K. the dramatic movements and gestures of a progressively exhausted swimmer, which would serve to express dramatically the same thing as Kafka's narration and description. It seems that this is exactly what Barrault did in his production, when he exploited the expressive capacity of the human body as well as the possibilities of stage technique to the fullest extent, in order to reveal K.'s obsessions, nightmare, and anxiety.

In his transposition of Kafka's work from the epic form to the dramatic form, Barrault has tried to reduce the gap between Kafka's highly evocative, narrative style and the more direct, projective means of a dramatic performance, by resorting to mime and gesture and employing them in a manner that clearly anticipates the "theatre of the absurd." Mere gesture moves beyond its traditional function of accompanying speech on stage for the purpose of clarification and emphasis, even though it is also used as such in the play; but here gestures and movements often replace words and sentences, revealing themselves as meaningful new resources in the expression of thought and feeling and in the exploration of being. Simone Benmussa confirms this when she writes in her "Travail de scène pour 'Le Procès'" in regard to the scene in the waiting room:

La mise en scène de Jean-Louis Barrault transpose dans les gestes mécanisés et oniriques et dans les mouvements au ralenti du groupe,

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<sup>28</sup> Pol Quentin, "Adapter le Château . . . ,"Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeleine Renaud-Jean-Louis Barrault, XX (1957), 13-16.



l'angoisse souterraine du roman, la fait resurgir, et, donnant au théâtre tout son rôle de contact sensible presque charnel d'une pensée, se rapproche ainsi davantage de la vérité profonde du livre. Il s'agit plus, ici, de traduire une sensation qu'un fait et de rendre visibles les impressions que l'on tire de la lecture. (Benmussa, p. 96)

Since it is primarily an emotional and even a subconscious experience that has to be dramatized, in other words something vague and irrational that has evolved from an ambiguous situation, the reliance on mime and gesture would seem more adequate than the use of discursive thought. The necessity of simplifying the narrative form, often reducing it to one or two phrases has, as already mentioned, frequently led to the destruction of the ambiguity inherent in Kafka's text. Gesture used independently of the meaning of the words could restore this ambiguity. For, whereas the words would say one thing, the gesture could contradict this by saying something completely different and, in this manner, re-establish the ambiguity. Thus, by putting the language into contrapuntal relationship with the action, the facts behind the language can be revealed. The gestures also render visible the impressions which Kafka creates by his lengthy narratives and descriptions. They characterize the nature of the Justice and the people with whom K. has entered into conflict as well as creating the link between the visible and the invisible realities, manifesting the hidden, latent contents of the latter so frequently suppressed by the former. Hence the importance of mime and gesture for the adaptation of Kafka's Der Prozess.

The incongruity, "l'insolite" of a situation, arising from the discrepancy between K.'s concept of the normal order of things and the strange reality in which he finds himself and which suddenly reveals itself to be contrary to his expectations, is often conveyed by a dissonance



between the triviality of the characters' gestures and the import of the issue with which they are dealing. Accordingly, the seriousness of K.'s arrest by the two Inspectors and later the interrogation by the Brigadier are put in question by the informality of their behavior: while K. is searching for his identification papers, the Inspectors gluttonously fill themselves with his food and stuff their numerous pockets with his linen; and during the interrogation that follows, the Brigadier, with a cold indifference, plays with matches and objects that he finds lying about on the dresser. This discrepancy between the importance of the issue with which K. has been confronted and the manner in which it is dealt with arouses ambiguous feelings of belief and disbelief, and uncertainty in K. as to the serious nature of the whole procedure and its executors. In these instances, gesture also serves to convey the ambiguous attitude of the servants of this ambiguous Justice, who fulfil their functions mechanically, without questioning their validity and as if ignorant of their broader implications. The ambiguity stems from the manner in which they are treating a serious problem. Gesture again is employed to translate an ambiguous feeling when K., by way of pantomime, tries to communicate to Fräulein Bürstner both the ridiculousness and the seriousness of the morning's event (which had "ébranlé ses nerfs"). Here, mime serves K. to fix an impression which he had gained of the characters' attitudes and caricature-like nature ("le brigadier - un parfait pignouf" [Gide, p. 69]) and also to add the required precision to the description of an occurrence which appeared to him incomprehensible and absurd: "J'ai appelé ça une commission d'enquête. . . . Au fait on n'a fait d'enquête sur rien. J'ai simplement été arrêté . . . mais par toute une commission" (Gide, p. 67). When asked to relate how it all occurred K. is said to "se livrer à une



pantomime burlesque, à la Charlot" (Gide, p. 68), which appears to be more expressive and appropriate for describing this unbelievable proceeding.

An example of how Barrault used gesture and movement to evoke K.'s growing anxiety is perhaps best cited from Simone Benmussa's scene analysis already quoted. Choosing two scenes in the play, she has tried to write down Barrault's stage and acting directions as "relevé au cours des répétitions" (Benmussa, p. 102). The feeling of nausea and dizziness which can be explained as the physical manifestation of K.'s growing, unconscious frustration, as he moves through the waiting room of the courthouse, is externalized and dramatized by a fantastic display of pantomime, lighting, and sound. A quotation taken directly from her analysis reveals how Barrault exploits words like "Monsieur désire? Vous éprouvez une sorte de vertige, n'est-ce pas?" by giving them visual expression:

Sur le mot "n'est-ce pas," chacun des accusés se précipite pour prendre sa chaise. Ils entourent K. et se figent dans un mouvement hallucinatoire de balancier; ils font corps avec leur chaise posée sur un pied et qui bascule dans le même imperceptible mouvement. Ils ont une attitude attentive, c'est K. qui, dans son vertige, les voit bouger. (Benmussa, p. 102)

Another example of the way in which K.'s frustrated endeavor to find clarification of his situation can be given visual form (taken again from the same scene) occurs when he asks one of the waiting men some questions pertaining to his reason for waiting and only receives a very vague and unsatisfactory answer:

Le mouvement d'ensemble commence: les accusés donnent l'impression d'être un amalgame en mouvement, une espèce de parasitage étouffant. K. paraît submergé. L'homme est passé derrière, il cherche confusement, il parle en aveugle, il tâtonne vers l'huissier qui s'est effacé, qui lui échappe. (Benmussa, p. 98)

Finally, Barrault also makes use of ritual and pure, stylized action, such as later frequently occurs in the plays of Genet, Ionesco, and Beckett.



The anti-literary attitude of the "theatre of the absurd" is in many respects a return to the old and even archaic traditions of a theatre which relied heavily on visual effects. With such "pure" action, the metteur en scène can create powerful theatrical effects enabling him to reach deep levels of meaning that no logical understanding or presentation could circumscribe. Esslin says that with "all its realism, the *mimus* not infrequently contained curious dreams and hallucinations. . . . In a gloss to Juvenal, the *mimes* are called *paradoxi*. And in fact everything fantastic is paradoxical" (Esslin, p. 233). Thus, in the final scene of the play, the mixture of realism and fantastic, which runs like a red thread through the play, are combined in the purest form of abstract theatre--the ritual. Two mute, fantastic figures ("Ils sont très grands et coiffés de chapeaux hauts-de-forme; en redingote. L'un d'eux porte à sa ceinture un long couteau de boucher" [Gide, p. 212]) silently go through the motions of a ceremony which, as if in a theatrical performance, appears to have been rehearsed. However, the outcome of this "jeu" is by no means just theatrical. To the contrary, it is highly realistic. In this respect, the ambiguity remains to the end.

As already indicated, the visual representation of thoughts and ideas is the most characteristic scenic trait of the "theatre of the absurd." The strangeness of K.'s surroundings arises from the projection of his inner conflict onto the outer reality. As his spiritual metamorphosis evolves and he becomes aware of himself, these external representations take on a different significance for K. By way of the silent spectators, present throughout the play, the psychological progress of K.'s consciousness, which moves from an awakening and uncomfortable guilty conscience to a conscious obsession of guilt, could be represented. Spectators are



present everywhere in the world of Kafka, watching and waiting; and, as K. looks upon them as being something strange that confronts him and forces him to react, they lead him to a new awareness. The spectators could also serve the same purpose as a Greek chorus, witnessing and commenting on the trial by their presence.

In the first scene, a curious "old woman," together with two other people who join her, watches the interrogation at K.'s arrest. They are silent and anonymous witnesses to his arrest. From Barrault's point of view their presence offers a dramatically effective means of showing K.'s awakening awareness to his surroundings, as well as being an externalization of an awakening guilt feeling; for their persistent presence creates in K. a feeling of discomfort which stems from his sudden position of being exposed. One is reminded of Sartre's statement: "Il suffit qu'autrui me regarde pour que je sois ce que je suis" (Goth, p. 229). These silent spectators increase in number as the trial "progresses." Two employees of K.'s bank, described as "observateurs nonchalants" (Gide, p. 33), who have attended his interrogation and are also present when he receives the anonymous telephone call, could contribute to his growing awareness of the two levels of existence which he is beginning to lead in his life, whereas previously his private, personal life had more or less merged with his professional life. Suddenly, these people are no longer comrades with whom he goes to drink beer after work. Suddenly, they are spying, hostile witnesses, as K. himself declares in the climax-scene. But not all of these silent spectators appear hostile merely by their presence, as for example Frau Grubach's "furtive apparition" behind the keyhole. In some cases, they actually help to frustrate K.'s attempt to win clarification of his situation. Thus, the three knocks at the door



coming from the captain's bedroom abruptly end K.'s conversation with Fräulein Bürstner; and the interference of the ugly student, at first a silent observer of the conversation with the washerwoman, frustrates once more K.'s attempt to comprehend the nature of the Justice with which he has become involved. The chorus of waiting men at the courthouse and the young girls outside of Titorelli's atelier all become uncompassionate witnesses to K.'s distress and mounting anxiety, which has gradually developed into an obsession that finally confronts K. in the dramatic form of a "gros oeil qui observe" (Gide, p. 198), attached to the inside of the lapels of the bearded attendants at the trial. At this trial, moreover, even people who appeared to have been well-meaning (Frau Grubach, Fräulein Bürstner, Titorelli, Leni) are amongst the spectators whom K. addresses as "Ah! vous en êtes tous, à ce que je vois, de cette bande de vendus et d'esclaves. Tous de mèche, réunis ici pour me guetter, m'espionner, me circonvenir" (Gide, p. 198). At the end of the play when K. has finally resigned himself to the incomprehensible, indifferent spectators pass by the scene of the execution and make the decisive comment concerning the significance of the whole of K.'s trial for the outside world: "Ça ne nous regarde pas" (Gide, p. 216). As Esslin notes:

The means by which the dramatists of the Absurd express their critique--largely instinctive and unintended--of our disintegrating society are based on suddenly confronting their audiences with a grotesquely heightened and distorted picture of a world that has gone mad. (Esslin, p. 300)

In order to achieve this effect, the dramatists of the "theatre of the absurd" rely heavily on artificial, technical and abstract scenic effects. A note in André Frank's "Il y a dix ans . . ." suggests the extent to which Barrault and Gide have themselves relied on these dramatic means.



Aidé en cela de façon magnifique par Labisse qui a conçu des décors puissants et dressé des pièges où l'homme est irrémédiablement prisonnier - et en utilisant les jeux d'une lumière froide et les rythmes d'une musique obsédante - on évoquera souvent la musique de Joseph Kosma. Bruit scandé de métronome, de marteau pilon, de tam-tam de mort, de pendule qui découpe le temps en tranches inexorables conduisant nos tympans, nos nerfs et notre esprit aux limites de l'obsession. (Frank, p. 34)

The decor in Kafka's novel is full of ordinary and familiar images. Most of the scenes take place in impersonal, public places such as bank-offices, a courthouse, and a cathedral, places which to the normal eye appear as images of social order and security. But by the adventure of his hero, his flight and pursuit, Kafka imparts to these images an air of unfamiliarity and hostile strangeness. The subjective psychological adventure in the novel, presided over by an unseen, incomprehensible power, and frequently projected onto K.'s objective surroundings, blurs rational certainties and allows irrational elements to creep in. Thus, the strangeness of the decor is a function of K.'s relationship to it. K. projects his inner fear, anxiety, and frustration onto these common objects. Gide and Barrault have materialized and crystallized this irrational element which is only suggested, albeit with disturbing force, in Kafka's novel. By so doing, by relying strongly on artificial, technical effects, they diminish the subtle interplay between the real and the imaginary or subjective in the novel, but succeed in making K.'s adventure theatrically effective and, at the same time, in moving it closer to the "theatre of the absurd." Places such as a huge office in which the noise of numerous voices, telephones, and machines intermingle, or a courthouse where corridors overflow with people waiting, or a cathedral enveloped in darkness and silence except for a small light--all such places can strain the average person's nerves. If this very person is also striving to come to terms with something that has thrown him out of his habitual calm and complacency,



such places can seem like a fantastic nightmare. This is the impression Barrault develops to the fullest, for example in the waiting-room scene, where K. nearly succumbs to the oppressive and asphyxiating atmosphere. Here, the staging of a dance macabre and the various nerve-straining noise effects--"bruit de métronome," "batterie: bruit d'un cœur qui bat et va s'affaiblissant," words spoken "sur une tonalité aigue" (Benmussa, p. 102)--contribute in creating a thoroughly fantastic effect. Another example of how the two French dramatists transform an incident that appears quite normal in Kafka's novel into something completely unreal and extraordinary is the scene at the office, in which K. receives the mysterious telephone call. Barrault and Gide have greatly amplified the mysterious possibilities of this call, such as its anonymity and its content, by introducing a "Haut-Parleur" whose voice arrests and suspends all normal activity and noise, and by imparting to K. silent gesticulations. At the same time, they have shown clearly and dramatically how K.'s inner preoccupation with his trial interrupts and imposes itself on his habitual, unreflective activities.

The technical device of sliding panels, walls, and curtains, which serves frequently to enlarge or diminish, to hide, or to reveal the decor within each scene, appears to be another suitable theatrical means of depicting the continual back-and-forth movement between K.'s inner, timeless experience and his outer factual activity. These same transformations take place in accord with K.'s inner feeling of freedom, which invents and removes obstacles as he becomes increasingly aware of his fundamental situation. It can therefore be said that, because the stage is a multidimensional medium, because movement, light, language, and decor can exist here simultaneously, the stage is particularly suitable for the communication of complex images and feelings such as exist in Kafka's work.



Another element in Kafka's novel which lends itself effectively to a dramatic adaptation and also anticipates another trait of the "theatre of the absurd" is the nature of his characters. They all have very little obvious emotional depth and are primarily physical projections of their functions, with which they identify so closely that, in the list of personages, only seven out of more than forty have personal names--Mme. Grubach, Fräulein Bürstner, Leni Block, Titorelli, Franz and Wilhelm. All others are known by such impersonal names as "the accused," "the washerwoman," "the student," "the big client," "the employees," etc. These characters all seem to be nothing more than the embodiment of human attitudes which, having been distorted by fundamental ignorance of the basic problems and meaning of life, are now only deception and vanity. They have become the personifications of an existence deprived of the dignity that comes from awareness--a trite, mechanical existence. They are mere shadows and puppets guided by hollow conventions and meaningless values. Dramatically, the absurdity of this existence expresses itself in the triviality of the characters' gestures, in the banality of their purely physical nature and needs, and in the discrepancy between what they pretend to be and what they actually are. Accordingly the women whom K. meets--Mme. Grubach, the washerwoman, Fräulein Bürstner and Leni--at first appear to be compassionate and understanding, even affectionate, but their actions eventually reveal the egoistic and personal motives for their attitude. In the case of the latter three, there is a marked sexual overtone. The washerwoman offers to help K. declaring "venez vous asseoir auprès de moi. Ah ce que vous avez de beaux yeux" (Gide, p. 81), only to be carried off a few moments later to the judge, "qui court après toutes les femmes" (Gide, p. 90) and at whose neck she throws herself,



receiving in turn beautiful silk stockings. The contradiction between Fräulein Bürstner's words "je n'en veux jamais à personne" (Gide, p. 71) and her lack of resistance to K.'s embrace also adds a touch of ambiguity to her words "J'adore rendre service" (Gide, p. 66). Leni's nursing and catering to all the lawyer's needs creates a discrepancy between reality and appearance because it is based on a distorted attitude. For Leni is not interested in caring for the lawyer as much as in getting a chance to meet the accused men who come to see him. All three of these women are basically indifferent to K.'s plight and his search for human understanding. They are attracted to him only by a sensual, physical urge.

This insensitivity and cold indifference also characterize the lawyer, Huld, whose name in German means "Grace." His function is to bring about progress in K.'s trial. However, since he, like all the others, is imprisoned within the huge organization of human life and Justice, he can only lead his client so far. His cold, professional interest also lacks human feeling and consideration (he has a weak heart). None of these people function of their own free will, but as mechanical prisoners of an unknown power ("Quelle est donc cette Justice que tu sers? Parle. A ceci je ne puis te répondre" [Gide, p. 204]) on which they have become completely dependent out of habit, complacency, and fear, but not out of faith. For this reason, their existence is without true purpose and their activities become absurd. They appear inhuman because they are totally passive and manipulated like marionettes. In order to convey to the audience this impression of "going through the motions of existing," stylized movement would diminish some of the subtlety of description in Kafka's novel. However, these characteristics, materialized and crystallized, would be dramatically effective, without distorting too greatly the impression which Kafka



wanted to give. The only character who undergoes a transformation in the play (unlike in the novel where it is never achieved) is K. himself. Through the loss of his false and vulgar security that takes its laws of conduct from materialistically based certainties, through suffering, anxiety, frustration, and loneliness that results from this loss, K. becomes an individual in the play, an "*être élu et traqué*." Thus, he becomes another character in the play who acquires a real name--Gide and Barrault calling him, in fact, Kafka.

By way of these characters, the play presents the audience with what Esslin calls "a twofold absurdity": On the one hand, it castigates satirically the absurdity of lives that are unaware of their true purpose in life; on the other hand, by way of K.'s experience, it reveals a more profound, more general absurdity, namely, the absurdity of the human situation itself--man in a world where he is deprived of belief in any certainties because of the loss of faith in metaphysical realities. This revelation is also one of the fundamental purposes of the "theatre of the absurd."

Two more elements which must be mentioned when dealing with the relationship that exists between the dramatic adaptation of Der Prozess and the "theatre of the absurd" are the language of the play and the frequent occurrence of the comical and grotesque. Martin Esslin, in his The Theatre of the Absurd, sums up most adequately the devaluation of language which is to be found both in the novel and the play:

And it is in this striving to communicate a basic and as yet undissolved totality of perception, an intuition of being, that we can find a key to the devaluation and disintegration of language in the Theatre of the Absurd. For if it is the translation of the total intuition of being into the logical and temporal sequence of conceptual thought that deprives it of its pristine complexity and poetic truth, it is understandable that the artist should try to find ways to circumvent this influence of discursive speech and logic. (Esslin, p. 296)



It is this "intuition of being" which Kafka tries to depict in his novel through the awakening of his hero to a world of double images and meanings. Words such as Justice, Guilt, Liberty, Justification, and Law, which possessed clarity and consecrated, logical meaning within the social context in which K. moved habitually, become, little by little, vague and ambiguous from the moment that K. begins to be estranged from his surroundings. In the search of justifying his existence, K. is confronted with a kind of Justice which is incomprehensible to his logical reasoning. This incomprehension is frequently alluded to, as for example by the lawyer who says: "Tâchez donc de lui faire comprendre (car pour moi j'y renonce) que l'accusé sera tenu pour coupable s'il n'a pas pu prouver son innocence." K. himself asks: "Mais comment prouver mon innocence si je ne sais pas de quoi l'on m'accuse?" And the Grand Juge declares: "L'accusé n'a pas à savoir de quoi on l'accuse; du moins pas avant sa condamnation"; to which K. replies: "Alors aucun moyen de s'en tirer . . . sinon par entregent peut-être, par relations" (Gide, p. 143). This example shows how absurd and meaningless words are in this conversation, how little they can actually help K. to understand, since their point of reference is absurd (i.e. illogical), whereas K. can only comprehend by relating them to something reasonable, understandable, and familiar to himself. This basic incomprehension defines K.'s relationship with the people he meets and who fulfil their limited functions within the vast hierarchy of law with which K. becomes involved. Unlike the "theatre of the absurd," which relies heavily on such means as nonsense verse, nursery rhyme, or poetic rhythm to reveal its divergence from the literary theatre of discursive logic, Barrault and Gide have, however, incorporated relatively few of these means. However, there are a few examples of short dialogues of



non-sensical crosstalk present throughout the play common to the "theatre of the absurd," as for instance:

K.. Vous désirez, Monsieur?  
 Franz: Vous avez sonné.  
 K.: J'ai sonné la bonne.  
 Franz: Pourquoi?  
 K.: Comment pourquoi?  
 Franz: Nous permettez-vous de vous demander pourquoi vous avez sonné la bonne?  
 K.: Parbleu! Pour qu'elle m'apporte mon chocolat.  
 Franz: Son chocolat. Il prétend qu'il sonnait la bonne pour qu'elle lui apporte son chocolat. (Gide, p. 38)

In some instances, too, there is a conscious emphasis on rhyme and assonance. For the sake of dramatic effect and because gesture often expresses the same meaning, Barrault has on several occasions tried to devalue the importance of language in the noise effects, movement, or other technical means. In the "Travail de scène," several good examples support this assertion. In one particular instance, the words spoken by "Le Chœur des Accusés" ("C'est un nouveau. - Eh bien, il n'a qu'à prendre sa place. - Il n'est pas encore habitué. - Tardera pas à s'y faire. Chacun son tour. Il a encore à apprendre. On apprend toujours assez vite" [Benmussa, p. 99]) are accompanied by the following instructions:

Le chœur des accusés est dit sur une tonalité aiguë. Les mots sont défigurés, caquetants. Les sons sont rapprochés du vrai mot, mais dans une fatrasie incompréhensible pourtant bien prononcée. On doit seulement comprendre distinctement les mots soulignés. (Benmussa, p. 100).

However, in one sense, the use of language in this play resembles that found in the plays of the dramatists of the absurd, for it is not used here to clarify matters or to solve problems:

Le Brigadier: Êtes-vous seulement accusé? Vous êtes arrêté, ce qui n'est pas la même chose. Ça, c'est exact. C'est un fait. Tout ce que les inspecteurs ont pu vous dire en surplus, c'est du bavardage. Mais mon rôle ici n'est pas de répondre à vos questions. . . . Vous parlez trop; c'est le comportement qui importe. (Gide, p. 37)



The emphasis on gesture and mime, the characterization, and above all the situation which the play presents, all contribute to creating comical and, frequently, very grotesque effects that also anticipate an element of the "theatre of the absurd." K.'s situation of being involved in an existence that is characterized by

les files d'attente devant les boulangeries, les enchevêtrements, comme de véritables toiles d'araignée, de la bureaucratie, l'aterrissement illimité; les grands procès qui n'en sont pas tout à fait des vrais, les promesses pour certains cas, mais jamais nous n'appartenons à ces cas (Barrault, Une troupe..., p. 112)

--such a situation is already absurd; but his attempt to justify his human existence through this inhuman organization appears grotesque. The struggle to comprehend an absurd (i.e. logically incomprehensible) power through all this bureaucracy must necessarily end in continual failure and frustration; and this the dramatists of the absurd have discovered can be comical in the eyes of an alienated and critical audience. It is the familiar technique of the circus-clown who, in an attempt to reach the goal of his desire, repeatedly falls on his face. Another example from the "Travail de scène" shows that Barrault resorted to precisely such well-known comical effects; for, when K. desperately attempts to reach the exit of the corridor and the fresh air, he repeatedly (as the directions are given) falls on his face. When K. says "Oui, c'est! c'est cela! sortir d'ici ..." (Benmussa, p. 103) the directions are "Première chute de face" and when he adds: "Car habitué moi aussi à l'atmosphère des bureaux. Mais ici comme vous le remarquez vous-même, c'est vraiment exagéré," the directions read: "Deuxième chute et reprise de la marche vers la cour. Il est à terre, les bras tendus en l'air" (Benmussa, p. 103). However, due to the seriousness of his situation these attempts already approach the tragic-comic.

Another element of the play that contributes to the comical impression is the fundamental incongruity existing between the triviality, the



banality of the routine of K.'s everyday life and the search for the essence of being. Humorous or rather grotesque as well is the discrepancy between the whole procedure and the seriousness of the issue with which it deals, namely K.'s attempt to justify his human existence before the inhuman, marionette-like servants of the body of Law. The characterization of most of these personages who make up the corrupt hierarchy of the body of Law is another aspect which contributes to the comical effect of the play. The pronouncedly physical nature of these beings lends itself ideally to an exaggeration of their gestures and movements, the best example being Block, whose humanity has been completely distorted.

Most of the mentioned elements which are said to bring the play close to the tradition of the "theatre of the absurd" are already inherent in Kafka's novel. This Jean-Louis Barrault must have sensed when he conceived the idea of adapting the novel to the stage, for he says:

Cette vision est particulièrement théâtrale puisqu'elle s'appuie en premier lieu sur l'ambiguïté de la vie; logique et absurde, tragique et burlesque, hostile et aimable, etc. etc. toujours à deux tranchants. (Barrault, "Cas . . . ,"Cahiers, L (1965), 81)



## CONCLUSION

This thesis has tried to show how the numerous difficulties encountered in adapting Kafka's novel Der Prozess to the stage resulted in some very significant changes and how these changes contributed to making of the adaptation a piece of special interest in the experimental development of the theatre of the twentieth century.

The complexity of the images and feelings in Kafka's work, the density, continuity, and unity which characterize his writing, the fundamental ambiguity of the hero's situation and, particularly the variety of possible interpretations arising out of his experience--all support the argument sustained by Kafka specialists that the difficulties to be encountered in a dramatization of the novel are almost insurmountable. However, in the opinions of J.-G. Chauffeteau, Martin Esslin, and Jean-Louis Barrault, other elements of the novel strongly favor a dramatic adaptation. Thus Chauffeteau in his article "Kafka et le théâtre," calls Kafka "un amateur de spectacle qui écrit des romans."<sup>29</sup> He maintains that many notations in his Diaries are witness to Kafka's fascination with the theatre and that Kafka's novels are really "représentations théâtrales" for they reveal "un accord profond entre le spectacle et le dialogue . . . un mélange parfait du geste et des sentiments . . un monde aplati en simples apparences réduit à un rôle de cadre sommaire" (Chauffeteau, p. 28). For Esslin the directness of Kafka's narrative prose, the concrete clarity of his images, the tension and mystery of his work, all favor a dramatic adaptation. Barrault seems also to have discovered all these elements in Kafka's work.

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<sup>29</sup> J.-G. Chaffeteau, "Kafka et le théâtre," Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeleine Renaud-Jean-Louis Barrault, XX (1957), 27.



For him the fundamental ambiguity of the novel presented no obstacle to a dramatization, but, on the contrary, appeared particularly suitable. For what else is the theatre for Barrault but "l'art de l'ambiguité," in which the expressive capacity of the human body and artificial technical effects can serve to expose other realities that lie behind the literary content.

Even though numerous dramatic elements as well as "des descriptions minutieuses de représentations théâtrales idéales et parfaites" (Chauffeteau, p. 24) can be found in Kafka's work, he himself wrote only one short dramatic fragment, Der Gruftwächter. One is tempted to ask why he did not follow his inclination and devote more of his energy to writing for the theatre? Quoting Max Brod, Chauffeteau gives a possible and seemingly convincing reason:

Kafka ne voulait pas que la représentation de ses drames, dans l'espace et dans le temps, les tire "vers le bas," vers le monde, la vie, le péché. C'est pourquoi il a continué à écrire des romans. (Chauffeteau, p. 28)

Apparently Kafka feared "une incarnation insuffisante" of his writing, which he felt would necessarily suffer from the "matérialisation dans l'espace et dans le temps" (Chauffeteau, p. 28).

In their dramatic adaptation of Kafka's novel did André Gide and J.-L. Barrault succeed in avoiding this "dégradation que fait subir à tout oeuvre la matérialisation"? Were they able to translate and recreate in their dramatic terms the predominating feeling of metaphysical anguish so tangible in the novel? Did their concept of the novel and the production inflict any major distortion on Kafka's work? Both men were deeply aware of the difficulty of their undertaking; both were concerned with yielding the stage to Kafka, with the intention of respecting all his objectives as far as it was in their power. Gide attempted "tout en m'effaçant le



plus possible" to adapt the epic narrative to the dramatic language of the theatre, while Barrault strove conscientiously to express visually "et non pas forcément par du texte" the fundamental thoughts and feelings. Many of their changes can be considered as being properly dramatic. In other words, many changes arose from the transposition of the epic form to the more compact dramatic form. Thus, elements such as the compression of time through the change in the order of events, the abridgement of long narratives, the juxtaposition of scenes, the omission of whole episodes, and the peculiar manner of scenery change, accelerating the development, add to the play movement and tension that was absent in the original work. As Claudel wrote, "l'atmosphère du roman est lente, lourde, léthargique, accablée, accablante, celle du cauchemar, d'un ennemi envahissant qui nous gagne et nous paralyse."<sup>30</sup> For the sake of communication and the orientation of the audience other changes necessitated dramatic magnification that frequently resulted in a distortion of Kafka's subtle ambiguity. Thus the undefined existential conflict in which the hero finds himself in the novel is on several occasions illuminated and defined by Gidian statements. However, it is the course which the crystallization and clarification of the conflict takes that constitutes a definite divergence from dramatic necessity; and that divergence reveals a strongly personal, Gidian interpretation, one that is familiar in Gide's own dramatic works. Whereas for Kafka the hero's "angoisse" remains an undefined, metaphysical feeling, for Gide the conflict is "'tiré vers le bas,' vers le monde, la vie, le péché"--for the benefit of an indifferent world it is given an ethical and moral value. Gide believed and made it clear in his own plays that the dramatist should be the guide,

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<sup>30</sup> Paul Claudel, "'Le Procès' de Kafka ou le Drame de la Justice," Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeleine Renaud-Jean-Louis Barrault, L (1965), 15.



not the slave of popular morality and that his own responsibility was to present new ideals for the development and liberation of the individual.

In his contribution to the dramatic transposition, Jean-Louis Barrault tried to supplement many of the highly evocative images and elements of the novel, necessarily suppressed by the compression into the dramatic form, with artificial, technical and abstract scenic effects. He found the multi-dimensional medium of the stage very suitable for translating the complex, but highly visual images and irrational feelings of the novel and the analysis of the adaptation has tried to show that Barrault generally, intuitively resorted to convincing and effective means. It is even possible that Kafka himself would have favored Barrault's strongly irrational style of production which was so far removed from the conventions of the naturalistic and realistic tradition of the theatre, particularly if one considers Kafka's own view and attitude to such things as gesture and theatrical magnification. In a conversation with Gustav Janouch he once remarked:

Der Schauspieler soll theatralisch sein. Seine Gefühle und Äusserungen müssen grösser sein als die Gefühle und Äusserungen des Zuschauers, um bei diesem die gewünschte Wirkung zu erreichen. Soll das Theater auf das Leben wirken, muss es stärker, intensiver als das alltägliche Leben sein.<sup>31</sup>

Janouch comments in his Gespräche mit Kafka, that the author loved gestures:

Seine Geste ist keine das Gespräch begleitende Verdoppelung des Wortes, sondern Wort einer gleichsam selbständigen Bewegungssprache selbst, ein Verständigungsmittel, also keineswegs passiver Reflex, sondern zweckmässiger Willensausdruck. (Janouch, p. 15)

In spite of the many merits of Barrault's production, his "free, fluid, and grotesquely fantastic style of production" must have been excessive for

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<sup>31</sup> Gustav Janouch, Gespräche mit Kafka (Frankfurt am Main, 1951), Fischer Bücherei, p. 37.



conveying Kafka's "style sobre, la façon modérée de manier le fantastique" (Goth, p. 125) that rendered so natural the most extraordinary events in Kafka's novel. Not having seen the production and therefore judging only from the general impression critics received at the time, I conclude it appears that Barrault's material production, the "perfection matérielle," threatened to submerge the sense and spirit of Kafka's content. However, it can probably be maintained that it was primarily due to this peculiar manner of giving dramatic form to elements inherent in Kafka's work, that Gide and Barrault brought something new to the theatre thus qualifying the adaptation as, what Esslin has called, "the first play that fully represented the "theatre of the absurd" in its mid-twentieth century form" (Esslin, p. 254).



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